Horror in Culture & Entertainment

RUE MORGUE



CRIME SCENES AND CANNIBALISM

Hannibal

SEASON THREE PREVIEW

WITH CREATOR Bryan Fuller

PLUS!

MADS MIKKELSEN & COMPOSER BRIAN REITZELL

ISSUE 155 MAY 2015 CAN/US $9.95

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MAY 2015 #165



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NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND



How did we get from cop to cannibal? I've been wondering this about the Hannibal Lecter movies.

Let's go back to 1986, when two important serial killer movies were released. John McNaughton's *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and Michael Mann's *Manhunter*. The former offers a shockingly nihilistic, violent and ugly portrait of a serial killer. Michael Rooker chillingly essays a confident, handsome, yet uneducated and murderous drifter based on real-life killer Henry Lee Lucas, in a film that's sickeningly effective in its dirty portrayal of dirty deeds. *Manhunter* by contrast is a much sexier, higher-budgeted beast, full of action and thrills that focus on the race to stop a cunning serial killer who carefully stalks his prey. Based on the Thomas Harris novel *Red Dragon*, it has towering, lanky Tom Noonan as Francis Dollarhyde, who's cultured, yet ghoulish, awkward and introverted. Both characters are abhorrent in their penchant for slaughter, but unattractive for other reasons, too.

Henry places the serial killer in the main role, while *Manhunter* focuses on FBI profiler Will Graham, and it contains the first onscreen version of Hannibal Lecter in a small supporting role. Brilliant, handsome, mannered, resourceful, charismatic and well-groomed, Brian Cox's serial killer (we aren't told he's a cannibal in this film), contains the seed of a new idea: the heroic serial killer, a vicious murderer as leading man.

It was this set of admirable traits, along with more screen time and some highly quotable dialogue that turned Anthony Hopkins' Hannibal Lecter into a pop-culture phenomenon after *The Silence of the Lambs* came out in 1991. When *Lambs* prequel *Red Dragon* was released a few years later, Ralph Fiennes' version of Dollarhyde was more conventionally handsome, and Hannibal became a much larger presence in the story. Now we've got Mads Mikkelsen in TV's wildly popular *Hannibal*. Whereas *Manhunter* is named for FBI profiler Will Graham (despite the double meaning of the title, he's the "man hunter" featured on the poster), the TV show is named after the killer, who's now the main draw.

Since *Silence of the Lambs*, we've had other films and TV shows with heroic serial killers, including *Natural Born Killers*, *Mr. Brooks* and *Dexter*. All of them share common traits: the murderer is handsome, fearless, outgoing, smart (or at least witty) and lives by a code. Despite an appetite for violence, murder and sometimes cannibalism, they each have their own warped sense of justice. Mr. Brooks and Dexter satiate their impulses by eliminating deserving wrongdoers. Hannibal kills those in his way, but also the rude and crude who offend his highbrow sensibilities, and even the demented Mickey in *Natural Born Killers* sets right a wrong by eliminating his girl's incestuous father. Henry, on the other hand, has no such poetry in his actions or lofty guidelines for his homicidal behaviour.

It slashers represent the mechanical-animal boogeyman, serial killers are the more relatable monsters. David Schmid wrote in his 2005 book *Natural Born Celebrities: Serial Killers in American Culture* that, "The iconic status of the character Hannibal Lecter indicates that serial killer movies such as *Silence* tend to feature more complexly individuated protagonists who therefore attract a greater share of audience identification than the faceless, practically anonymous killing machines of the slasher movie."

It's personality that has also endeared these serial killers as supermen – not in the comic book cape-'n'-tights sense, but in the Nietzschean sense of a superman, or *Übermensch*. This new breed of pop-culture killer is a superior human with above average strength of mind and body, and a freedom that comes with being unbound by official laws. Nietzsche believed that the *Übermensch* represented the future in a world where "God is dead" (meaning that a Christian god is no longer a credible source of moral guidance), that these supermen should be judged differently than average men, and that they should be cruel if necessary.

With atheism on the rise, these supermen have stepped in to fill the void. It's why both superhero and serial killer stories are so popular. Hannibal is certainly an *Ubermensch* with his brains, brawn and skills – in fact, he's so talented in the kitchen that we can overlook the fact that he breaks one of our most strongly held taboos: cannibalism. Will, by comparison, is weak, sloppy, disorganized and a general wreck.

The *Übermensch* becomes increasingly popular when the threat of divine retribution, and/or the law seem helpless to prevent bigger evils, such as terrorism. There's an obvious appeal in someone who is free to fight savagery with savagery without caring about the rules.

Or, in the case of Hannibal, we're dealing with someone who punishes those who are simply rude. Just imagine how Lecter would deal with Internet trolls, say something nasty on his feed and see how long it would be before he was eating your liver with some fava beans and a nice chianti? My, what a delicious idea.

Dave Alexander

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Illustration and design by Andrew Wright

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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



I'M NOT WHAT YOU WOULD call a gorehound, so when I get to the Gore-met's column each issue, often I am looking at an article and some pictures dedicated to a film or filmmaker that I've never heard of. When my eyes fell upon some familiar stills from the classic *Dead Alive* in Issue *#154*, I smiled and proceeded to dig in. It turned out to be one of the most well written articles I've ever read from the Gore-met. Deeply personal and penned with poise and dignity, the man gave us a rare peek into his life which I'll bet sounds so very similar to a lot of his readers (with or without the divorce). Like the genre movies we enjoy so much, life is full of tension, scares and uncertainty, but the Gore-met is a veteran and, like any heroic final girl, he will survive. I'm certain he has some sturdy support at the offices of *RM* should he need it, and I'm sure I speak for more than just myself when I say good luck in writing the next chapter of your life Mr. Gore-met. We readers will be here awaiting the next article.

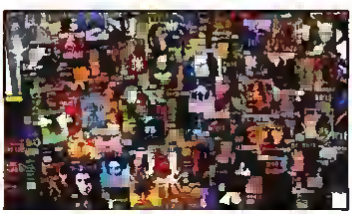
ED "ORACCENSTEIN" LUSKEY – BURLINGTON, ON

I AM AT A LOSS FOR WORDS. My debut album Shadow Windhawk and the Morticians just got a 4 1/2 out of 5 review in *[RM#154]*. A near perfect score from the world's foremost horror culture publication. I am so honored. Thank you to Jon Steffens for this review. It really means a lot to me.

NOAH BAILEY, VIA FACEBOOK

HERE'S A COLLAGE OF MY *Rue Morgue* magazine collection. Missing a few but almost complete. Thanks *Rue Morgue*!

@NOAHCNANOLER, VIA TWITTER



EXCITED FOR THE NEXT ISSUE of *Rue Morgue*. Love getting it in Horror Block each month. The article on William Mortensen *[RM#153]* was fascinating.

@POPCULTURECUBE, VIA TWITTER

I JUST RECEIVED my first copy of your magazine in my first Horror Block. Issue *#153* has made me a fan. Thanks for keeping print media alive. Your article on William Mortensen was an eye opener. Because of you I now own a copy of *The Command to Look* and agree that he was a visionary in the field of photography.

GENE VALLEE, VIA E-MAIL

I WANTED TO GET A FEW THINGS off my chest. First of all, I love your magazine, you do an excellent job designing it and the content is always superb. I have been going to Texas Frightmare Weekend for about six years now and I thought it was awesome that you sponsored it. I truly miss seeing you guys there and always looked forward to picking up back issues. I thought you did a great job at designing the booklets and all the material related to the convention, even if it was getting a great artist or designer to do it. I liked that you got quality people to work with. I am so unhappy with what Fangoria is doing for the convention. I didn't like the material from last year's convention and this year's isn't shaping up to be much better. So I wanted to tell you guys that I wish you would come back to TFW and that I appreciate the work you do.

DANNY CARTER, VIA FACEBOOK

I THINK YOU GUYS SHOULD count up the number of times you use the word titular in each issue.

CLEEVIS GRAVES, VIA FACEBOOK

THE BEST ACTORS put their heart and soul into a movie, but after the heavy price that Brandon Lee paid to create *The Crow*, it seems incredibly disrespectful to propose a remake so soon. Hollywood stinks with reboots and remakes lately, and any original idea seems best stepped on, but do we need another pale imitation of a great story when there are so many wonderful horror novels that have yet to be produced on screen? Leave *The Crow* alone.

MATTHEW WILSON – WOLVERNAMPTON

RUE MORGUE AT THE RONDO AWARDS: hope you guys win in your categories. I love *Rue Morgue*!

@67SANDREWBAKER, VIA TWITTER

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EXPIRING MINDS...

ON RUE MORGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE



If you had to eat human, describe your ideal dining experience.

A nice big juicy-arse steak with a touch of garlic and a plum reduction to dress it and chips. Gotta have chips.

SUE JOHNSON

Puréed in juicer. Add a pint of vodka.

RODNEY STEWART TRABB

Caucasian breast lightly seared with a sweet mammary milk sauce that can be suckled if so desired... I just made myself sick.

SARAH BOGHASHA

I'd probably just grind them up into cheeseburgers. It's hard enough skinning a deer.

KING OVOK

First, I'd be a werewolf; second, it would be very messy.

KATHERINE K. OOYLE

On bathsalts, in Miami.

CARMEN ROMEO

I am glad I don't know any of you sick bastards and yet a little scared that I don't.

BRUCE KLOSOWSKY, JR

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM OR

POST MORTEM

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Dreadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS ~ HORROR HAPPENINGS

H.R. GIGER DOCUMENTARY FILM FEST COMES TO NEW YORK

May 2015 marks the first anniversary of H.R Giger's death and the forward momentum of interest in the visionary artist's work shows no signs of inertia. Indeed, this month not only sees the release of *Dark Star HR Giger's World* Belinda Sallin's feature-length documentary about the Swiss surrealist, but several events are planned to commemorate his passing.

Foremost amongst these is the Second H R Giger Documentary Film Festival, which commences on the night of Friday, May 12 (the date of Giger's death) and closes the following evening. Accommodating this unique celebration of nearly 50 years of Giger-related filmmaking is The Museum of Arts and Design in Manhattan, New York. Leslie Barany, Giger's agent, confidante and close friend for 33 years, is delighted to have secured the prestigious venue.

"We feel this is a good time and a good place to hold the second festival," says Barany. "The first one took place in Poland, in 2012, during the Krakow Film Music Festival. Our event was held in one of the theatres associated with it and only consisted of 90 minutes of programming. The screenings were then followed by a Q&A with myself and Patrick Spanbauer [co-director of the 2005 film *Through the Eyes of H.R. Giger*], and we billed it as the First H R. Giger Documentary Film Festival. I always wanted to repeat that event on a slightly larger scale."



H R. Giger works on the airbrushed painting Spell III in his studio, in 1976

Although the final program was not confirmed at press-time, films tentatively outlined include two early efforts by Giger and Fredi Murer: *High and Hemkiller* (1967), an 11-minute experimental short shot on 16mm, and *Swiss Made* (1968) a 45-minute science fiction film which features a Giger designed extraterrestrial, reminiscent of his *Alien* xenomorph. Also provisionally scheduled are *Giger's Alien* (1979), which offers a portrait of the artist at work on the imperious classic, and *A New Face of Debbie Harry* (1982), which features footage recorded during the making of the album *KooKoo* (for which Giger directed two promo videos at his Zurich home).

"It took us a while to assemble all this material, as we had to dig deep and get films over from Switzerland and other places," reveals Barany. "The festival will take place on the Friday night, the Saturday afternoon and the Saturday evening, and our initial idea is that the older films like *Swiss Made* and *Giger's Alien* will be grouped together in one screening. Then the more recent films made in the 1990s and 2000s will be shown on another evening – although we still might shift things around. We'll also be screening bits of *H R Giger's Sanctuary* [2007] and *H R. Giger Revealed* [2010], but I can confirm that we are not showing *Dark Star HR Giger's World*."

Barany states the reason for this exclusion is simple. *Dark Star* is "too new" and is released in US theatres on May 15 (although Canadian audiences can catch previews of the doc at the DOXA Film Festival from April 30-May 10). He does, however, urge all American readers to visit The Frida Cinema in Santa Ana, California, which is conducting its own mini Giger festival during the last weekend of May. Running for one week, the arthouse will be screening the *Alien* movies, *Species* and *Killer Condom* (Giger worked as a creative consultant on the horror comedy) as *Dark Star* plays its theatrical engagement there.

"I don't want it to seem like our project is piggy-backing *Dark Star* as it's been in the works for a while," says Barany. "That's why I've gone to the trouble of calling it the *Second* H R. Giger Documentary Film Festival. I think people will enjoy seeing all the great footage we've collected of this uniquely talented artist."



MICHAEL DOYLE

SCI-FI-HORROR COMIC BOOK ARTIST BRETT EWINS DEAD AT 59

Influential British comic book artist Brett Ewins, best known for his work on horror-tinged sci-fi properties such as *Judge Dredd* and *Bad Company*, died on February 16, 2015. Ewins suffered from a number of debilitating health problems in recent years, including emphysema. He was 59 years old.

Ewins was a key figure in the UK comics renaissance of the 1980s. He first gained notoriety in the late '70s, when he began a lengthy stint with the weekly Brit comics anthology *2000 AD*. Ewins lent his charactenstic line-heavy artwork to both covers and interiors, often working alongside fellow artists Brendan and Jim McCarthy. He racked up numerous credits on popular *2000 AD* features, such as *Judge Dredd* and *Future Shocks* before moving on to *Dredd* spin-off *Anderson: Psi Division* and the creature-heavy war serial *Bad Company*, about a futuristic platoon led by the hulking, Frankenstein's Monster-inspired Kano.

Many North American comic fans got their first taste of Ewins' work in the mid-'80s with Eclipse Comics' short-lived but influential anthology series *Strange Days*. Ewins' success on the UK scene led to work with DC, including short stints on genre favourites *Swamp Thing* and *Hellblazer*. Unlike fellow British artists Dave Gibbons and Steve Dillon, though, Ewins never found commercial success in American comics. His US projects – including the violent post-apocalyptic crime yarn *Skreemer* – earned critical praise but failed to catch on with readers, even as they helped shape the sensibilities of a new generation of comics creators.



Ewins' cultural influence wasn't limited to his work as a comic book artist. In 1988, he and Steve Dillon launched the long-running counterculture magazine *Deadline*. Part comics anthology and part music magazine, *Deadline* was a proving ground for young talent, including artist John McCrea (DC's *The Demon*, IDW's *Mars Attacks*) and *Tank Girl* and Gorillaz co-creator Jamie Hewlett.

"I have Brett to thank for taking a punt on my more 'indie' art back when I was nothing more than a wee smudge of an artist," says McCrea. "He'll be sadly missed by all the comics community and everyone who knew his work. He was an individual talent, and his design work was right up there alongside [famed Spanish artist] Carlos Ezquerra and Brendan McCarthy."

Ewins' health took a sharp decline in the early '90s, forcing him to essentially retire from the comics industry when he could no longer draw. A decades-long struggle with mental illness led to legal problems in 2012, but Ewins' work has enjoyed a revival in recent years, inspiring exhibitions by UK urban-art collectives Mutoid Waste Company and the InsaneFelonsCartel. Last fall, Titan Comics published *The Complete Johnny Nemo*, a collection of stories featuring the violent, sardonic futuristic detective created by Ewins and Peter Milligan in 1984. Thanks to Ewins' legendary workload throughout the 1980s, there's plenty of his work for new fans to discover.

"Brett's work seemed ubiquitous in the mid-'80s," recalls Paul Goodwin, director of the 2014 documentary *Future Shock! The Story of 2000 AD*. "His work on those psychedelic horror-tinged *Anderson* strips was phenomenal – towering, nightmarish beasts with eyes and mouths everywhere. He certainly opened the doors for me to access and enjoy things like Mike Mignola's artwork in *Hellboy* in the following years. It's very sad to lose such a unique talent."

APRIL SNELLINGS





Examples of Brett Ewins' work and Ewins (left) with Jamie Hewlett



UPCOMING ANTHOLOGIES OFFER FEMALE PERSPECTIVES ON LOVECRAFT

In February 2014, a fiery debate opened up on message boards and Facebook comment threads, provoking a variety of discussions and responses: where were all the female writers of Lovecraftian fiction?

The conversation struck a chord with female weird fiction fanatics, including writer/editors Silvia Moreno-Garcia in Vancouver and Lynne Jamneck in Auckland, New Zealand.

"I was like 'What are you talking about? I know these women are out there!'" says Moreno-Garcia.



"I realized something was seriously amiss," adds Jamneck.

Both editors decided it was time to release their own all-female Lovecraft anthologies. *She Walks in Shadows*, edited by Moreno-Garcia, is due out this fall on her own weird fiction imprint, Innsmouth Free Press; Jamneck's *Dreams From the Witch House* comes out on Dark Regions Press at the end of 2015. Both collections will feature a mix of award-winning female writers of speculative fiction, dark fantasy and horror, including Gemma Files (who has stories in both anthologies), Joyce Carol Oates, Angela Slatter and Ann K. Schwader, as well as newer writers and a number of female illustrators. And, most encouragingly, both anthologies were borne from highly successful crowd funding IndieGogo campaigns (*She Walks* raised over $9000, while *Dreams* raked in nearly $29,000.)

She Walks includes pieces about Mother Hydra ("Dagon") and Shub-Niggurath, the deity frequently summoned (but rarely described) in numerous stories, and there's even a piece from the point of view of Lovecraft's mother. And while the table of contents for *Dreams* wasn't yet ready at press time, Jamneck says her writers were given free reign.

"A lot of people hear 'Lovecraftian' and they automatically assume that Cthulhu, Azatoth, Nyarlathotep, Dunwich or Innsmouth will eventually show up," she says. "We all love these places and those monsters, but a Lovecraftian story is so much wider in scope than Old Ones. It has a particular feel to it that addresses the cosmic, the unknown, the weird and the unsettling. I was really interested in seeing how these elements would be conveyed by authors within a multitude of different settings and characters."



Both are eager to show fiction lovers of all stripes that female genre writing doesn't end with Ursula K. Le Guin and Shirley Jackson – and that women can be weird as hell too.

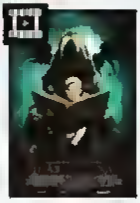
"For many decades men have dominated the horror scene, so it's difficult to change that perception," Moreno-Garcia says. "By virtue of simply having all these women in a single volume, I think the anthology will both allow readers to become aware of writers that might not have been on their radar, and to show the ways in which these voices differ."

ALISON LANG

ENTRAILS

❯ Filmmaker Neil Marshall (*The Descent*) has started a new TV and film production company with his agent, Marc Helwig. The duo has signed a two year contract with Legendary TV for the venture, under the title Applebox Entertainment, which will focus on genre projects. Marshall has won an Emmy for directing an episode of *Game of Thrones* and has most recently directed episodes for the new season of *Hannibal*.

❯ A substitute teacher in Columbus, Ohio has been sentenced to 90 days in jail for showing her class the horror anthology *The ABC's of Death*. Sheila Kearns, a 58-year-old grandmother, lost her job after one of the students informed a parent that she screened the movie. Kearns claimed she was unaware of the film's content and reportedly showed it to five Spanish classes, ages ranging from 14-18. *ABC*'s producers, Ant Timpson and Tim League, launched an IndieGoGo campaign to help fund Kearns' legal defence but only raised $6500 of their $15,000 goal.



❯ Stephen King's 1987 novel *Misery* is headed to Broadway. Bruce Willis will make his Broadway debut as injured author Jack Sheldon, and Elizabeth Marvel will take on the role of "his number one fan" and tormentor Annie Wilkes. The play is schedule for a limited run in the fall and will be written by William Goldman, who penned the screenplay for the 1990 movie adaptation.

❯ *City of Rott* creator Frank Sudol has announced that his next project will be an animated horror series called *Tales of the Dim*. There are currently two episodes on the BlackArro Productions YouTube page, including "In the Ceiling" which focuses on a landlord whose tenants keep disappearing. Sudol says there are 26 episodes envisioned, but further entries will depend on fan response.

❯ After a number of re-imaginings, Swedish novel *Let the Right One In* is now set for a small screen adaptation. A&E plans to develop the story of a young boy and his vampire neighbour into an ongoing series. There has been no announcement of when filming will start but *Teen Wolf* showrunner Jeff Davis and screenwriter Brandon Boyce (*Apt Pupil*) are on board to adapt the novel.

❯ The British Board of Film Classification has banned the movie *Hate Crime*, making it the fourth film it has denied a certificate to – others include *The Bunny Game*, *Grotesque* and *The Human Centipede 2* (which was later released after extensive cuts), though *Hate Crime* is the first ban applied to a VOD release. Directed by James Cullen Bressack, the film centres on the home invasion of a Jewish family by a gang of Neo-Nazis. Among the BBFC's reasons for banning it is the "physical and sexual abuse and violence are accompanied by constant strong verbal racist abuse."

CHARLOTTE STEAR

MONSTRO BIZARRO

Nessie is in the news again. According to a March 17th story in Scotland's *Daily Record*, two women recently spotted and attempted to photograph what they believe is the Loch Ness Monster. Local resident Connie Ross and her visiting daughter, Reyshell, were sightseeing when a "black hump emerged from the dark waters." The pair had cameras in hand, but by the time they realized what they were seeing, "the object had sank virtually out of sight and moved away further into the loch, leaving behind a perfect circle of water – like a whirlpool." They took photos and a short video, both of which show a dark object in the water. "We were all quite excited by it," Ross told reporters. "If we had been a little quicker with our cameras, we would have better images."

LYLE BLACKBURN

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ANCHOR BAY ENTERTAINMENT CANADA



CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO. 155

Earlier this year, Indian authorities in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh found dozens of human body parts in one of their police stations. Although foul play was not suspected, authorities are unsure why the bodies were not disposed of properly.

Jean Rollin improvised most of *The Rape of the Vampire* (1968) after losing the script on the third day of shooting.

Nicolas Cruz, 31, and his wife Kristina Munoz, 26, both died on June 5 when their separate vehicles collided head-on in North Texas, near where they were both employed.

A 22 year old woman died this past November in Wales in what police called "an act of cannibalism." The victim's face had been eaten off by a 34 year old male, who died after being tasered by police.

Alfred Hitchcock turned down the chance to direct *The Bad Seed* (1956).

An Australian man decided to surf on a dead whale which was, at the time, being feasted on by sharks. He later admitted it was a bad idea.

Throughout his career, John Carpenter has been credited under a variety of names, including Frank Armitage, James T. Chance, John T. Chance, Rip Haight and Martin Quatermass.

In 2011, a Texas based photographer stumbled upon over 700 abandoned brains from the University of Texas Mental Hospital. He has since published the book *Malformed: Forgotten Brains of the Texas State Mental Hospital*.

In August of 2014, Oscar Aguilar of Mexico City accidentally shot and himself in the head and died while posing for a selfie with a loaded gun.

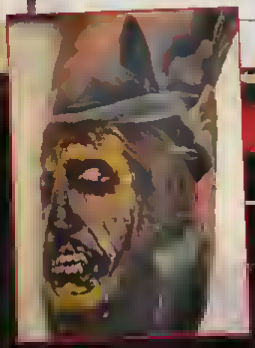
One of the Spectators in the film *Rubber* is played by Daniel Quinn, who starred in *Scanner Cop* (1994) as a man who could make people's heads explode with his mind, just as the tire does in this film.

In 1900, American physician Jesse William Lazear tried to prove that Yellow Fever was transmitted by mosquitoes by letting infected mosquitoes bite him. He then died of the disease proving himself right.

Adolf Hitler's favorite movie was *King Kong*.

In 2010, Alan Catterall, 54, was accidentally incinerated in an industrial oven when his son-in-law-to-be turned it on, not realizing he was inside.

COMPILED BY BENOIT BLACK AND JAMES JESUS MARCOT
GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT? SEND IT TO: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM



BODY HORROR

DR. DEATH
ARTIST: Alan Aldred (facebook.com/alan.aldred)

"I really enjoyed doing this tattoo of Vincent Price as Dr. Death [from the 1974 film *Madhouse*]. The colours are based off of a painting by the legendary Basil Gogos, and it was definitely a challenge trying to replicate that style. This is part of what will be a full sleeve of classic horror characters."

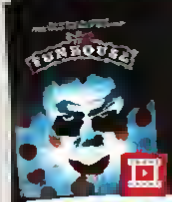
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5. **LORD OF ILLUSIONS**
 SWANN-SONG SWORD STABBING
6. **CANDYMAN: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH**
 CANDYMAN BECOMES A LESS A HANDY MAN



TORTURED TAGLINE

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"PAY TO GET IN... PRAY TO GET OUT!"

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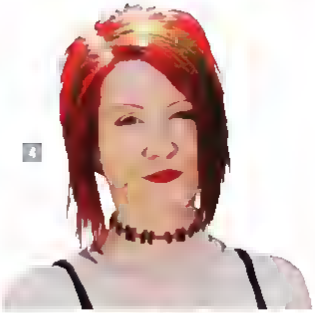
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CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

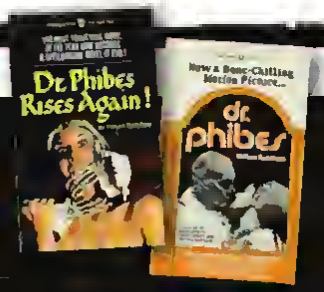
DR. PHIBES AND *DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN!* TIE-IN NOVELS

(Award Books, 1971, 1972)

One of Vincent Price's most iconic characters – revenge-seeking organist, Dr. Anton Phibes – was also featured in two '70s tie-in novels. *Dr. Phibes* (eschewing "*The Abominable*" of the first film's title) and *Dr. Phibes Rises Again!* Penned by the character's co-creator, William Goldstein (based on his and James Whiton's screenplay), the novels expand on numerous elements in the films, including the back stories of Phibes' victims. Prices vary widely depending on condition, but on average, copies sell for $25 to $30 apiece on sites such as alibris.com and amazon.com.

JAMES BURRELL

MORE CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES AT RUE-MORGUE

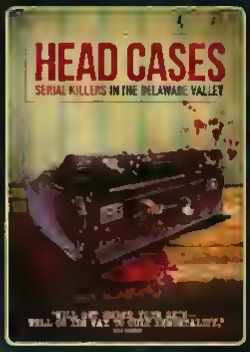


EVIL IN EVERY WAY.



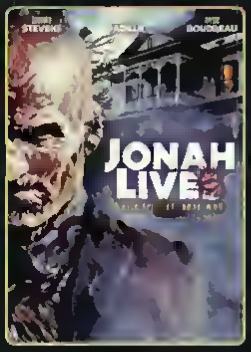
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JUST BEFORE EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE CANNIBALISTIC SERIAL KILLER PSYCHIATRIST RETURNS TO WREAK HAVOC FOR A THIRD SEASON, ***HANNIBAL*** CREATOR BRYAN FULLER SHARES SOME OF HIS RECIPE FOR THE MOST MACABRE SHOW TO EVER AIR ON NETWORK TELEVISION

Murder is Meat

by RON McKENZIE

GRAFTON, WEST VIRGINIA: ON A WINDSWEPT BEACH, FBI AGENTS INVESTIGATE A HORRIFIC, SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE CRIME SCENE. Towering over them is a grisly monolith comprised of bodies in various states of decay – torn apart and lashed together into a human totem pole. Will Graham, the team's criminal profiler, arrives at the site and begins to visualize the events leading up to the totem's construction. Blessed (or cursed) with a heightened sense of empathy, he synchronizes himself with the killer's mindset. He closes his eyes and an ambient pulse signals a transition as time seems to roll backwards. We see Graham's mind re-enact the events of the totem's construction, culminating in the vicious murder of the most recent victim, the final piece of a gruesome art project. Standing back to take in "his" handiwork, Graham verbalizes the killer's thoughts: "This is my resume. This is my body of work. This is my legacy." This is also the shockingly macabre world of NBC's *Hannibal*.

Television shows such as *The Walking Dead*, *American Horror Story* and *Penny Dreadful* have pushed the envelope with mature and graphic content usually reserved for the big screen, thanks to the creative freedom to be found on cable networks. All the more surprising, then, that *Hannibal* airs on one of "The Big Three" networks. Of course, it's easier to take a chance on such a show if it has a built-in fanbase, and *Hannibal* has been building one for nearly 35 years.

It all began with the book *Red Dragon*. The 1981 Thomas







Criminal Minds: *(Clockwise from top) Will Graham (Hugh Dancy) at the crime scene in "Buffet Froid," Gillian Anderson as Dr Bedelia Du Maurier, and a killer's artistry on display in "Hassun."*

Harris' novel introduces both the deeply-troubled Graham character, on the trail of a serial killer dubbed "The Tooth Fairy," and Dr. Hannibal Lector, the brilliant psychiatrist/serial killer/cannibal he apprehended years before. The story was adapted in 1986 by Michael Mann (*Thief*, *The Keep*) as *Manhunter* (see pg. 62), with William H. Petersen and Brian Cox as Graham and Lecter, respectively. In both book and film, however, Lecter's actual presence is minimal, it wasn't until Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* that Hannibal "The Cannibal" truly became a household name. Demme's adaptation of Harris' 1988 sequel to *Red Dragon* starred Jodie Foster as FBI trainee Clarice Starling, who seeks the counsel of Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) in the hunt for a serial killer who kidnaps and skins his victims.

The film was a phenomenal critical and box-office success, sweeping the top categories of the 1992 Academy Awards, including Hopkins winning for Best Actor. Two sequels featuring the cannibal killer followed (*Hannibal* and another take on *Red Dragon*), and then the maligned 2007 prequel *Hannibal Rising*, which seemed to be the end point of diminishing returns.

But then Bryan Fuller entered the picture. The creator of short-lived yet acclaimed TV shows *Dead Like Me*, *Pushing Daisies* and *Wonderfalls* had a chance encounter with Katie O'Connell, CEO of Gaumont TV, which had just acquired the rights to the Hannibal Lecter character, as well as all materials/characters found in Harris' *Red Dragon* and *Hannibal*. When she asked Fuller if there was a series that could be made from the material, he proceeded to outline how it could be done. He was promptly brought on board to give Hannibal Lecter a rebirth.

Taking *Red Dragon* as its template and foregoing all previous incarnations of the characters, Fuller's *Hannibal* focuses on events of that first novel while also expanding on the mythology. Retired FBI Profiler Will Graham (Hugh Dancy) is called in by Special Agent-in-Charge Jack Crawford (Laurence Fishburne) to assist the bureau's Behavioural Science Unit, currently investigating a series of gruesome ritualistic murders. The team also includes consulting profiler Dr. Alana Bloom (Caroline Dhavernas), fibre analysis expert Special Agent Beverly Katz (Hettienne Park) and fingerprint expert Special Agent Dr. Jimmy Price (Scott Thompson).

Working alongside them is enigmatic psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter (Danish actor Mads Mikkelsen, previously best known for playing Bond heavy Le Chiffre in *Casino Royale*). Cultured, urbane, with a nuanced appreciation for art, manners and fine cuisine, he is the polar opposite of the broken, constantly dishevelled Graham. The relationship that forms between the two men becomes the anchor point for the series: both of them are surrounded by darkness, both external and internal, yet where Graham walks the razor's edge to maintain his sanity and morality, Lecter has no such concerns. Their cat-and-mouse game, which started to develop in the first season, came to a violent, bloody climax at the end of the second season.

Hannibal has been lauded for its intelligence, visual panache and performances, with well-deserved praise for Dancy and Mikkelsen (see p.19). Where Fuller's previous work has always leaned towards the visually fanciful, with a darkly comical bent, this show has all the whimsy of an autopsy. That's not to say it isn't a feast for the eyes, however. Surreal, monstrous imagery blossoms in Graham's mind, his visions rendered in tableaux that are both nightmarish and sumptuous. Set to an equally lush and complex score by Brian Reitzell (see pg. 21), the show is a sublime work of art that Lecter himself would surely approve of.

With Hannibal's true nature revealed in last season's cliffhanger (which drew in Hannibal's own psychotherapist, Dr. Bedelia Du Maurier – played by *The X-Files*' Gillian Anderson), "Fannibals" have been eagerly waiting to see who survived the doctor's purge. Season 3, premiering June 4th, will answer those questions, as well as bring one of Harris's other "monsters" into the mix: Francis Dolarhyde (*The Hobbit*'s Richard Armitage) – *Red Dragon*'s "The Tooth Fairy." *Rue Morgue* caught up with Bryan Fuller, who shared some of his diabolical ingredients for the new season, his inspirations for the show's aesthetic, and the insights that go with pushing the boundaries of network television.

Let's begin with a look at the show's trajectory. Each season has had a very specific thematic focus: with Season 1, it was Will's unravelling in the presence of Hannibal. Season 2 finds Will and Hannibal forming a symbiotic bond, even with Will's attempts to kill him. What would you say the narrative through line is for Season 3?

I think it's very much about carrying the water – the blood, actually – from Season 2 into the new season.

MADS MIKKELSEN GRABS A KNIFE AND SINKS HIS TEETH INTO ONE OF THE GENRE'S MOST NOTORIOUS ROLES

Serving up Hannibal

by MICHELE GALGANA

BRINGING POPULAR HORROR MOVIES TO THE SMALL SCREEN IS NO EASY THING. *Tremors* (2003), *Freddy's Nightmares*, *Blade: The Series*, *The Shining* miniseries, the 1987 *Bates Motel* series (which never got past the pilot stage), *Rosemary's Baby* – all are destined for obscurity. And yet sometimes an ordinary handful of eggs can become a heavenly soufflé with the right touch, especially if that show is *Hannibal* and the main ingredient is Mads Mikkelsen.

Mikkelsen, a gymnast and dancer who segued into acting in his home country of Denmark, rose to fame alongside writer/director Nicholas Winding-Refn, with a starring role in *Pusher* and its first sequel. A career in cinema shot out from there, landing him roles in a host of critically acclaimed movies, including *After the Wedding*, *A Royal Affair*, *The Hunt* and *Valhalla Rising* – in which he once again collaborated with Winding-Refn to play a fierce Viking named "One Eye." The role that brought him global recognition, however, was James Bond villain Le Chiffre in *Casino Royale*.

Enter the legendary De Laurentiis Company, long involved in adapting Thomas Harris novels featuring Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter to the big screen, having produced *Manhunter*, *Hannibal*, *Red Dragon* and *Hannibal Rising*. This time they wanted to do something different and, together with show creator Bryan Fuller, worked to bring everyone's favourite flesh and fava bean-eating villain and his FBI adversary, Will Graham, to the small screen.

"I was asked to audition, and I was reluctant because Anthony Hopkins did it to perfection," recalls Mikkelsen. "Trying to copy that would be creative suicide. After meeting with Bryan, five minutes turned into two hours. [*Hannibal*] was so enigmatic and that's really why I wanted the part. If it was just a copy of what came before, no way."

A craftsman performer, Mikkelsen completely inhabits the role of the cannibal psychiatrist, and yet brings something entirely new to the role. Gone is the patrician with the all-knowing menace of 1991's *The Silence of the Lambs* and its sequels. Nor does he rehash the odd mix of highbrow and gruff that Brian Cox brought to the role in 1986's *Manhunter*.

"My Hannibal has a funny accent," jokes Mikkelsen. "[Hopkins' version] was from Wales, [my version] is from Lithuania. Anthony had a finite measure of screen time, and in our show we get to build up the characters. In both cases, they are Hannibal. They both love music and fine food, and hate the banal."

Another welcome departure is Hannibal's new onscreen relationship to his nemesis, Agent Graham, played to riveting effect by Hugh Dancy. The dynamic between the two characters has developed into a demented "bromance" that has been built up from the show's first season and reached a frenzied crescendo at season two's finale. In that episode, Graham is left seemingly mortally wounded, after betraying Hannibal and conspiring with his boss Jack Crawford (Lauwrence Fishburne) and tabloid reporter Freddie Lounds (Lara Jean Chorostecki) – whose death they fake – to draw the not-so-good doctor out in the open.

"If Hannibal wanted to kill Will, he'd be very dead," states Mikkelsen. "He was surprised to smell Freddie on him, and very upset. It was a betrayal like he's never seen before."

Perhaps there's more betrayal to come – or an amends. In a teaser for this year's third season, Hannibal appears in Italy with his own psychiatrist, pretend wife, and possible hostage, Bedelia Du Maurier (Gillian Anderson). The spot also shows Graham approaching Hannibal with the words "I forgive you." Whether those words are from the heart or suggest the machinations of a spy remains to be seen.

Not surprisingly, the show's soap opera-like storyline has cultivated a legion of diehard fans. Their loyalty has catapulted *Hannibal* into a success story and has convinced Mikkelsen to begin attending conventions to meet the "Fannibals," even posing with them in staged dinner party photo ops.

"We were hoping a lot of people would watch it, but we also knew a lot of people would not because of the hardness and grimness of the show's content," he says, smiling. "Let's face it, *Hannibal* is not a children's bedtime story. It's violent and also intellectual. But we realized there's a whole cult on the Internet that follows the show. Thanks to them, we were able to get a second and third season, and we're really grateful."

And thanks to them, there is now a rumour that the show may be putting out an official cookbook. Mikkelsen, however, isn't sure it's the best idea.

"We've made jokes and have talked about it, but what are we going to expect from that book?" he says. "We can make a cool, funny book, but out of 10,000 people out there, somebody's gonna do the [wrong] thing. 'Oh, take some human flesh? I'll do that!' No, I think it's a dangerous project. It can be funny and interesting, but there will be somebody out there who goes, 'Yeah, I like that dish.'"







The Art Of Atrocity *(left to right) A gruesome sentence is carried out on the judge in Will Graham's case in the episode "Hassun" special agent Beverly Katz (Hettienne Park) investigates fungus growing in kidnap victims in "Amuse-Bouche," and (below) the shocking human totem pole from "Trou Normand"*

There was this seduction in the first season, where Hannibal very much manipulated Will and did horrible things to him in the interest of seeing how pure a human being he could be – from the Devil's perspective, of course. In the second season, Will really gave the Devil his due and was working behind the scenes to convince everybody of who exactly they were dealing with. In effect, seducing the Devil. In that moment, in the finale, when Hannibal smells [tabloid reporter] Freddie Lounds on Will and he realizes that Will has been lying to him, it's a heartbreaking moment for the Devil, because he allowed himself to be fooled. He allowed himself to be human, and he saw the weakness of it. So that resentment, and self-resentment, over "How did I allow this to happen" – we're carrying the damage of that through to Season 3, where the nature of their relationship has to come to an inevitable conclusion. They both realize that they may not be able to survive each other separately or together, so what is the solution to that?

The end of Season 2, with Hannibal's escape, was both a cliffhanger and seemingly an end point to the series. Was this always your intent, to allow for an endpoint?

Oh, absolutely intentional. Both seasons ended in ways where that could be that. If we had ended it at Season 1, with Will Graham behind bars and Hannibal Lecter tipping his hat, I would have been very satisfied with that ending. That would have been a good place to go out. With Season 2, it was absolutely intentional to say, "Wouldn't it be an amazing end for a show called *Hannibal*, if Hannibal had dispensed with all the characters, dropped the mic and walked offstage?"

The show has taken liberties with the Hannibal canon, one example being Lounds, who is now female. How did you determine those kind of changes?

Really, it's about the alchemy of the bigger piece. With Freddie, our issue going into the show was that it was such a sausage party, with Hannibal, Jack Crawford, Will Graham and Freddie Lounds. There were no women in this story except for Alana Bloom, Beverly Katz and victims. So that was just a matter of necessity. We just had to tell a broader story, and changing the gender of a character is something that has been going on in films and storytelling for some time now – Ripley in *Alien* was originally supposed to be a man. So it's always interesting to look at a character and see how their gender changes their point of view and often, it doesn't. Not in dramatic ways, but in very subtle ways where you can see how a woman navigating a situation has to use a different skill-set than a man navigating that situation, in terms of the conflict and resolution. There's a gender bias there that is unfortunate, but it's such a subtle thing. Like Freddie has to get from point A to point B – does having a penis give her a rudder?

Hannibal and Will have been portrayed by various actors over the years. What was it specifically about Mads Mikkelsen and Hugh Dancy that made them your Hannibal and Will?

Hugh was the first person cast and he was the unanimous decision the network, the studio, myself, [producer] David Slade, we were all "Yeah, he's the guy," so there was no uncertainty. He would give us that window into Will Graham's soul. In the book, Graham is a borderline asshole. He's very interior, very moody and he exposes himself creatively to very dark energy, so he bears that burden. We knew Hugh was going to deliver that and he was also going to allow the audience into his story. He had an open face. When it came to Mads, it was less unanimous, because the network didn't quite see it, initially. But the more we talked about that character, they realized it was a more interesting call.

Mads' portrayal of Hannibal makes the character seem like an alien in a human disguise, observing with detachment and analyzing everyone he comes into contact with.

He is superhuman, in a way. One of the very first conversations I had with Mads about the character is that I really see him not so much as a man, but more



THE BEAUTY AND BRUTALITY OF *HANNIBAL*'S IMAGERY IS MATCHED ONLY BY COMPOSER **BRIAN REITZELL**'S SCORE.

Movements in Blood

by DAVE ALEXANDER

"I SCORE WHAT THEY GIVE ME, AND WHAT THEY GIVE ME IS OFTEN QUITE DERANGED," explains Brian Reitzell, the composer behind the layered, multi-faceted score for *Hannibal*. "The whole process can be quite mad, really. I am definitely embracing the madness in creating the music for the show. Doing things and combining things I have never tried or heard before."

Reitzell, who is scrambling to deliver tracks for the show's third season at the time of the interview, boasts a diverse body of genre work, including *An American Werewolf in Paris*, *30 Days of Night* and *Red Riding Hood*, as well as a variety of dramas, comedies, TV shows, short films and even a video game. But he's clear that none of those projects have been as large, as diverse, or as demanding as creating music for NBC's hit show.

"I wasn't really given anything specific [in terms of direction]," says Reitzell. "Bryan Fuller, who created the show, says he wants to be 'cocooned' by the music, so I'm making something that's quite physical. We take full advantage of surround sound and sub woofers. Timbre and space are my favourite things to play around with. We talked about being psychological, and they had temped with my score for *30 Days of Night* [meaning they used that score as a temporary one for Hannibal – *Ed*.] *Hannibal* is sort of a continuation of that scoring process where music and sound design converge."



Reitzell collected instruments since he was a child and says he keeps all of them at his disposal while constantly buying new ones and even inventing others. For his work on *Hannibal*, many types of horns, percussion and especially strings are mixed with a variety of "found sounds" from items such as shells, bones, tree branches and knives. On one track, "Will Remembers Ear," which was used for the sequence in which protagonist Will Graham recalls Hannibal drugging him and using a tube to insert a human ear into his stomach, Reitzell incorporated one of his daughter's toys, a collapsible plastic tube, into the mix.

Comprising a range of emotions, from manic to ethereal, elegant to deranged, Reitzell's tracks are anchored by his choice of organic experimentation. To help give the effects and music form, he uses certain sounds and motifs for each central character (such as the clarinet for manipulative hospital administrator Frederick Chilton), and abandoning them once that character has been killed off. Like Fuller, he has also made the conscious decision to steer clear of the existing *Silence of the Lambs* series.

"*Lambs* is great," asserts Reitzell. "I had seen it a few times back in the day but I didn't watch it in preparation for *Hannibal*. I would rather not be influenced by someone else. I always like to do what feels right to me. I'm best at being myself. There *is* a connection with the Bach music but that ultimately comes from the books."

With four double LPs on limited edition vinyl out – comprising music from the first two seasons of the show (from Invade), and another limited edition double vinyl LP of Reitzell's favourite tracks out May 24 from Mondo (pictured) – it's clear that his approach is working. As fans eagerly collect the show's music, Reitzell feels it's important to keep delivering new experiences in order to keep them engaged with the world of the show. To that end, he reveals that he has both new instruments and collaborators lined up for season three.

"I brought in an upright bass player, Reggie Hamilton, who I last worked with on *30 Days of Night*. I love the low, guttural tone of that instrument. My orchestra is getting bigger every season. There wasn't any violin until season two, just cello. I have also had a few custom instruments made for the season and collected a bunch of instruments from my travels between the seasons, so I have a few more spices in my pantry."

Playing around in *Hannibal*'s kitchen does have its dark side, however, and Reitzell reveals that – like Will on the show – the more time he spends in the realm of everyone's favourite cannibal connoisseur, the harder it is to shake him off.

"*Hannibal* has gotten under my skin," he admits. "It is the first project that I have worked on where the characters have entered my own nightmares. The staging of the show is so fantastical that I look at it as an opera piece, so it's never all that scary. It's like the opposite of something like *The Blair Witch Project* or *Jaws* or something that is super real. But it has still managed to haunt me."

of a fallen angel. That was after just one script had been written, where he's only in half of it. It just sunk in: what if there was this untold supernatural story with Hannibal Lecter's origin that we would never go into detail with? That he is a fallen angel here on Earth and fascinated with the beauty of humanity, yet is determined to subvert it to spite his God. That has been a through line that we have always wanted to make sure that we were telling in both of those stories, that both were accurate in terms of how his performance and Lecter's story could be interpreted. So there is an alternate universe/Biblical fantasy version of Hannibal Lecter that is also happening underneath the skin of the television show. It's very much "The Devil and Daniel Webster" [the famous Faustian short story by Stephen Vincent Benét]. It becomes a parable on greater issues of humanity, with Will Graham as the representative of empathy, the human condition, being at war with the greater temptations of the world. And the Devil.

"I REALLY SEE HIM NOT SO MUCH AS A MAN, BUT MORE OF A FALLEN ANGEL."

– Bryan Fuller, ON HANNIBAL

Will's dreams are one of the strongest visual elements in the show, particularly how he sees Hannibal as a demonic black stag. Considering a deer is usually seen as gentle, or even benevolent, how did this image come to be the symbolic metaphor for Lecter?

This was a very natural progression from the very first image in the show, and I remember pitching this to the network, on how we were going to evolve this stag that Will sees in his first dream sequence. There are the ravens who are picking at the corpse of the young woman who's impaled on the severed stag head, and they become amalgamated in his subconscious. So there's this raven-feathered stag that becomes representative of Hannibal's relationship with Will. As Will's awareness of who Hannibal is grows, and his manipulations over the course of the first season, that feathered stag evolves into a stag-man. When we started talking about the stag-man, and looking at designs of it, it was, like, "Oh my god, it's a Wendigo!" – a Native American spirit that possesses people and turns them into cannibals. It was just simpatico. This made perfect sense, the evolution of the raven-feathered stag into a Wendigo would represent this devil that seduces or drives mad the person it possesses. We didn't know that were doing that, but we did it, and it worked out perfectly.





Exquisite Corpses: *Two of Hannibal's most extravagant set pieces feature a body melded into a tree in a parking lot, and a human mural in the shape of an eye*

> "I'M USUALLY PRETTY SHOCKED AT WHAT WE GET AWAY WITH."
>
> – Bryan Fuller

The series' crime scenes are wonderfully baroque and ornate. How do you conceive of such artistic death set pieces and do they serve a purpose beyond being simply gruesome eye candy?

[Laughs] Well, there are some very creative people out there – and they're all on the writing staff. Really, the show owes so much to the "Davids" of my youth, Cronenberg and Lynch, who really were great inspirations for me as a storyteller and as a filmmaker. Visual representation of body dysmorphia is so fascinating to me. The things that we can do to the human body, to undo it or enhance it, or to transcend it. I remember talking about the human totem pole and we were, like, "What's the murder scene for this episode?" We talked for days about it, and someone just said, "A human totem pole!" So we started thinking, what does a human totem pole mean? It's a celebration of culture, a symbol of warning. It can be terrifying, it can be representative of a history. So we thought, what if there's this killer who finally wanted everyone to know what he had been doing, to let the world know, "This is my body of work." Often, it can be a very simple process, where I'll say, "Wouldn't it be cool if you could play someone's vocal cords like a cello?" So that led to a great conversation with Brian Reitzell about the nature of music, and that the very earliest instruments were made from bone, and how fascinating it is to break the body down and celebrate it in pieces, as well as desecrate it. There's this celebration/desecration motif that we present on the show. I loved the human mural [in Season 2's "Sakizuke" episode], which was inspired by a Busby Berkeley choreographed number, as much as anything. Or making "human angels" (Season 1's "Coquilles") – people being aware of this thing that the Vikings used to do called Blood Angels, where they would rip their lungs out of their victims' backs and create wings. I thought, "Oh wouldn't it be great to do that on the show?" So then it becomes a matter of "What's the story behind that? Why are they making these angels?" You take an image, you take it apart and fit it into a character's point of view. You learn important things about who that character is and how they see the world. And that's fun. It becomes more than "This is gross," it becomes, "This is what this character is thinking." It becomes this character's art. It's a heightened version of reality, because usually murderers are just assholes who do terrible things to other people and don't have that complicated a motivational system. We're telling a story that requires greater depth of exploration, so of course we make all this stuff up which is incongruous with reality. Because in reality, they're just dicks.

Hannibal ***is easily one of – if not the – most visceral shows on network TV. How the hell do you get away with what you've been able to show?***

I'm usually pretty shocked at what we get away with. The relationship between myself and Joanna Jameson, who is the Standards and Practices Executive at NBC, is a very good one and I'll always call her and say, "We're about to try this, so how do we get away with it?" She'll give advice on things like, say, a scene that requires nudity. We have this great lesbian sex scene in the third season with Margot Verger [Katharine Isabelle] and it's so surreal, erotic and kaleidoscopic. We did some very visually interesting things to imply the things that we cannot show on network television. You can't show thrusting, nipples or cracks or things like that. So we did a trick where the kaleidoscopic spin of bodies gives you the illusion of intercourse.

Some of the most arresting and beautiful imagery on the show also comes from the meal preparation in Hannibal's kitchen. Congratulations on making cannibalism seem appetizing. When will we see the rumoured **Hannibal** ***cookbook?***

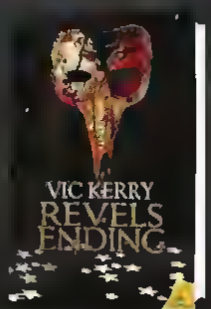
[Laughs] My personal favourite is the bacon-wrapped heart. Janice Poon, who is our master food stylist, does have a book coming out this summer, *The Hannibal Cookbook*, that will go through all of the recipes on the show, with illustrations, which is very exciting. That comes out later this year, probably to be in with the release of the third season.

It's been said that the most popular and prominent horror stories are very much a product of their time. What does that mean for **Hannibal**?

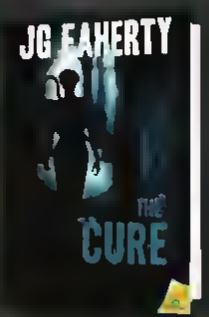
We're in an age of rampant consumerism. Every time I go home, I'm horrified at the amount of packaging that I throw away and how wasteful it is. So here is guy who is the ultimate consumer, except that he's a consumer of man. He's also an aesthete, who is able to turn anyone into a delicious meal. So with this idea that consumerism is rampant in our culture today, there is something about Hannibal being that ultimate consumer, one who turns all other consumers into the product.

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CLIVE BARKER TELLS US WHY HE'S READY TO SAY GOODBYE TO PINHEAD WITH THIS MONTH'S PUBLICATION OF THE LONG-AWAITED SCARLET GOSPELS



"DO YOU UNDERSTAND?" THE FIGURE BESIDE THE FIRST SPEAKER DEMANDED. ITS VOICE, UNLIKE THAT OF ITS COMPANION, WAS LIGHT AND BREATHY – THE VOICE OF AN EXCITED GIRL.

Every inch of its head had been tattooed with an intricate grid, and at every intersection of horizontal and vertical axes, a jewelled pin driven through to the bone. Its tongue was similarly decorated. 'Do you even know who we are?' it asked.

'Yes,' Frank said at last. 'I know.'

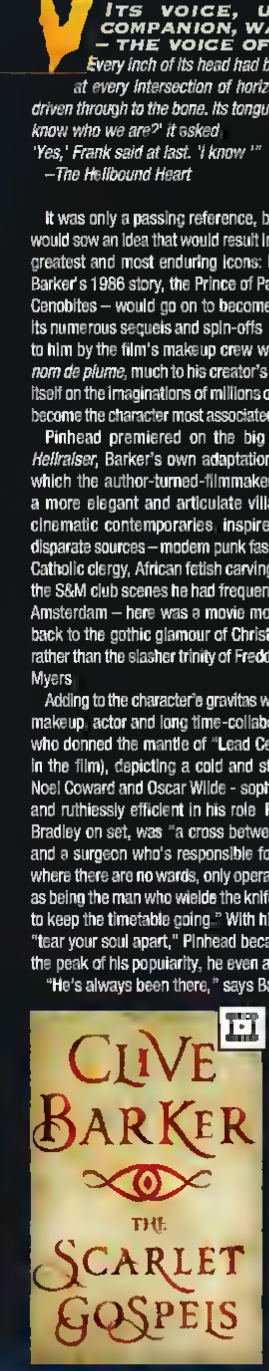
–The Hellbound Heart

It was only a passing reference, but in those four sentences Clive Barker would sow an idea that would result in the creation of one of the horror genre's greatest and most enduring icons: Pinhead. From that first appearance in Barker's 1986 story, the Prince of Pain and his merchants of suffering – the Cenobites – would go on to become monsters of cinema in *Hellraiser* and its numerous sequels and spin-offs. Pinhead – the nickname given to him by the film's makeup crew which became his official *nom de plume*, much to his creator's chagrin – has inflicted itself on the imaginations of millions of fans worldwide and become the character most associated with Barker's work.

Pinhead premiered on the big screen in 1987's *Hellraiser*, Barker's own adaptation of his novella, in which the author-turned-filmmaker set out to create a more elegant and articulate villain than his other cinematic contemporaries, inspired by a number of disparate sources – modern punk fashion, the garb of the Catholic clergy, African fetish carvings and scarification, the S&M club scenes he had frequented in New York and Amsterdam – here was a movie monster that harkened back to the gothic glamour of Christopher Lee's Dracula rather than the slasher trinity of Freddy, Jason and Michael Myers.

Adding to the character's gravitas was the man under the makeup, actor and long time-collaborator Doug Bradley, who donned the mantle of "Lead Cenobite" (as credited in the film), depicting a cold and sterile cross between Noel Coward and Oscar Wilde - sophisticated, intelligent and ruthlessly efficient in his role. Pinhead, Barker told Bradley on set, was "a cross between an administrator and a surgeon who's responsible for running a hospital where there are no wards, only operating theatres. As well as being the man who wields the knife, he's the man who has to keep the timetable going." With his Shakespearean proclamation to "tear your soul apart," Pinhead became an instant hit with horror fans. At the peak of his popularity, he even attained sex symbol status in Japan.

"He's always been there," says Barker of his most enduring creation. "It's impossible to say that I ever walked away from him. I'm working with him in some capacity almost daily. Someone will either ask for a quote on him, or I'll be working on a new *Hellraiser* comic, or he'll have been mentioned in some movie villain list, so it wasn't like he is ever very far from my doorstep. For that matter, I don't think he could have got very far. I don't think I would have let him. Or maybe he wouldn't have let me."



And yet, nearly 30 years since Pinhead's first appearance, Barker is finally saying goodbye to the character who has been so intertwined with his own history. *The Scarlet Gospels*, which Barker promises will be "the last Pinhead story" is set to arrive May 19 (from St. Martin's Press), two decades after its initial announcement. It is Barker's final word on the *Hellraiser* mythos.

Readers can expect this last excursion into the realm of the Cenobites to blend the sweeping scope and scale of the author's 1991 fantasy epic *Imajica* with the no-holds-barred visceral nature of *The Books of Blood*. In *The Scarlet Gospels*, the world's most powerful practitioners of magic live in fear as they're hunted down and executed by a demonic entity known as HellPriest (the character's true name, Pinhead is only in insult by his enemies with severe repercussions for those who utter it). Long in the servitude of Hell's infernal powers-that-be, the Head Cenobite has gained a taste for ambitions above his place in the grand scheme of things. He requires power to attain his goals, so he's taking it from our world's most expert wielders, hunting them down and finishing them off with his trademark



Avatar Of Anguish: *Doug Bradley as Pinhead from 1987's* ***Hellraiser****, and (opposite) Clive Barker's painting of the demon*





Hellworlds: *Barker's early concept [illegible] and Scott Bakula in* ***Lord of Illusions*** *as Harry D'Amour, the supernatural private investigator whose work leads him straight to Hell for a showdown with the "Prince of Pain" in* ***The Scarlet Gospels***

sado-masochistic finesse, such as tearing apart his prey from the inside-out with a multitude of serpentine hooks and chains, or forcing a female victim to spontaneously give birth to a full-grown demon by way of spellcraft.

Yet, in as much as this is Pinhead's story, it is also an important turning point in the life of another Barker mainstay: Harry D'Amour, the long-suffering supernatural private detective who's been a recurring character in Barker's other works, including *The Books of the Art* (the epic trilogy about a secret battle between good and evil, which so far consists of *The Great and Secret Show*, from 1990, and 1994's *Everville*) and Barker's last cinematic outing as director, *Lord of Illusions* (1995). D'Amour never looks for the darkness but it always finds him, so it comes as no surprise when a routine case in New Orleans brings him into contact with the sinister puzzle cube LeMarchand's Box (a.k.a. The Lament Configuration), thereby entwining him in Pinhead's quest. When Norma Paine, a blind medium and Harry's closest friend (also a recurring character in D'Amour's stories), is abducted and taken to Hell, the rivalry becomes very personal indeed. D'Amour and a small group of compatriots, who have dubbed themselves The Harrowers, cross the threshold not only to halt HellPriest's machinations, but, for Harry, to save someone he loves. It is bloody, vicious and epic, and at the end of it all, two of Barker's most famous characters will be completely changed by its events.

> **"I WANTED THIS BASTARD TO GO OUT WITH AN UNDIGNIFIED END."**
>
> **-CLIVE BARKER**

"I wanted this bastard to go out with an undignified end," says Barker, "and I mean that. I did not want him to be given some clever, rhetorical ending. I wanted him to get the end that he deserves. He's a villain, let's not forget this. I've heard some people say, 'Oh, he's doing some really nasty things in this book. Why does he have to do such nasty things?' He's a bad guy, for fuck's sake! He does bad things because he's a bad sonofabitch and he's now going to get his comeuppance."

While Barker has been tangentially involved in many of the franchise's sequels and spin-offs, *Gospels* marks the first time since 1988's *Hellraiser* that he's has written for Pinhead. While there are traces of the Head Cenobite's cinematic DNA in *Gospels*, the story is not a continuation of any of the mythology set up in the film series or any of his multiple incarnations in comics. In Barker's view, sticking to canon has never been a concern, specifically when it comes to transitioning between adaptations.

"Adaptations and the forms themselves prompted that decision," he says. "From a very early time it became clear that every medium would be informed by its own aesthetic merits. When I was writing the stories these characters first appeared in, I was limited only by the words in my head. When adapting them for the screen, other questions came into play: budget, location, etc. From those moments on, the mandate given to me by the respective forms dictated that each medium has its own continuity. And it continues to be that way."

For the past few years, Barker's focus has been on the passion project *Abarat*. The all-ages quadrilogy, first launched in 2002 and set to continue with the fourth book (still in the works as of press time), is viewed by many as a change of pace from his darker, more mature works. But for Barker, switching gears between his young adult fantasy epic and the more visceral horrors

BEYOND HIS NOVELS AND FILMS, CLIVE BARKER HAS SUCH PANELS TO SHOW YOU...

COMIC BOOKS OF BLOOD

by RON MCKENZIE



CLIVE BARKER'S MONSTERS, MUTANTS AND MAGICAL BEINGS HAVE LONG FOUND A HOME IN THE PAGES OF COMIC BOOKS. Early adaptations of *Books of Blood* (Eclipse's *Tapping The Vein*, 1989 – 1992) Marvel/Epic's expansions of the *Hellraiser* and *Nightbreed* universes in the early '90s, plus more recent adaptations of *The Thief of Always* and *The Great and Secret Show* by IDW Publishing (2005 and 2006, respectively) are now joined by a series of new Barker titles from Boom! Studios.

It started in 2011 with the launch of the three volume maxi-series comprised of *Hellraiser*, *Hellraiser: The Road Below* and *Hellraiser: The Dark Watch*, which picks up directly after the events of the 1988 movie *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, with Kirsty Cotton once again drawn into conflict with Pinhead and the Cenobites. The story took some innovative and risky chances with the mythology, including having Pinhead revert back to his former human self, Captain Elliot Spencer (previously introduced in *Hellraiser III*), and turning him into the comic series' main villain, and the flip-side of that transformation having Kirsty temporarily become the new High Priestess of Pain.

It also introduced Barker's Private Eye, Harry D'Amour, into the mix, a character who first appeared in *Books of Blood*, and here takes on the mantle of Pinhead, as Kirsty's replacement. This would constitute the first meeting between D'Amour and Pinhead in advance of *The Scarlet Gospels*, even though the two stories are separate.

"To Clive, the continuity between the *Hellraiser* comics and *The Scarlet Gospels* was not an issue," explains Ben Meares, creative consultant for Barker's company, Seraphim. "The comics keep their own continuity, which is separate from the continuity of *Gospels*."

With the success of the *Hellraiser* miniseries, (and its subsequent anthology follow-up, *Bestiary*) Boom!'s next Barker launch was *Nightbreed* in 2014. The series' initial arc, which will end with issue 12 later this year, details the history of the Breed's more popular characters before the fall of Midian. The prequel narrative ended with issue 8, then picks up the story after the events of the recently released Director's Cut of the 1990 film, with the now disenfranchised monsters trying to survive in the world of man.







As well as those licensed properties, Boom! became the home for the brand-new original graphic novel miniseries *Next Testament* (2013) whose third installment is scheduled for this coming August. Co-written by Barker and Seraphim's Mark Miller, the twelve issue run tells of the resurrection of Wick, the "one true god," awakened by occult-dabbling millionaire Julian Desmond. A hedonistic and cruel being, Wick unleashes a multitude of horrors on the world and it falls to Desmond's son, Tristan, and his wife, Elspeth, to find a way to defeat this maniacal deity. The story features sex, violence and wholesale destruction on display in equal measure.

"Comics are, above all else, the medium of the imagination," says Meares of the scope of the storytelling in *New Testament*. "There are no budgetary limitations, at least not when it comes to telling a story. If you can imagine it, you can find a way to make it work in a comic. Clive's concepts are big and they demand a big execution. These are worlds that would take months, and God knows how much money, to build if we were telling them on film. After novels, comics are simply the best way to get an unfiltered view into Clive's worlds." For Barker fans seeking a new twist on his older stories, select tales from *Books of Blood* have also been adapted into a series of animated "motion comics" complete with sound effects and music, the first of them, the titular introduction story, is now available through the Madefire app. "The Midnight Meat Train" is scheduled after that, with adaptations of "Pig Blood Blues" and "The Yattering and Jack" slated to follow.

"Clive has a whole lot of stories he wants to tell and see told in the comic format, so we are always working to get more going," says Meares. "Should you expect more? Always."

of Hell isn't really something he gives too much thought to.

"There isn't really that much of a changeover," he insists, "at least not in my head. I don't find that *Abarat* is what you might call lighthearted. It's a pretty dark world. Yes, it is a series aimed at a younger audience and for that reason I don't go into detail with violence, but that doesn't mean that terrible things don't happen. Suns are blotted out. There are apocalyptic visions. Entire families burn to death. Without that last part, we wouldn't even have a narrative. So if you look at the two on a broader level, there really isn't much call to switch gears."

As *Abarat* more than aptly demonstrates, Barker's greatest strengths as an artist and writer is his ability to build a world, and *The Scarlet Gospels* is a grand testament to that skill. Hell is very much a complete and fully-realized world with its own geography, varied life forms, cultures and political struggles, of which the Cenobites are only a small part. It is a much more expansive vision of Hell that the Labyrinth of *Hellraiser II* even hinted at.

> "I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO SHARE THIS VISION OF HELL."
> -CLIVE BARKER

"I've always wanted to share this vision of Hell," asserts Barker. "I've never liked the Dantean vision of Hell as a place which has nine circles, each of which has its own self-serving function. That kind of organized apocalypse did not appeal to me."

Despite the necessary presence of the supernatural and the alien, Barker's Hell is inspired much more by reality than any other fantastical vision or interpretation.

"It made more sense to me that Hell would be like the Warsaw ghettos run by the Nazis," he elaborates. "That, if you think about it, is Hell. Because what is the metaphor of Hell? It's a bunch of unpleasant creatures doing terrible things to people who – depending on your faith of choice – may or may not be deserving of that punishment."

With an expansive Hell and Pinhead getting the lion's share of coverage leading up to the book's release, it's easy to forget that *The Scarlet Gospels* also features important developments for D'Amour.

"It's very difficult when you have two characters as big as these, where each sort of trails their own history, to actually justify the presence of both characters," says Barker, "but I always thought Pinhead and D'Amour were sort of yin and yang. The two characters belonged together in that way. Lest we forget, D'Amour is not exactly helpless or without his own dark elements. Some of them come into the book, but there is a lot I'd still like to write about."



***Hellbound Hearts:** The Cenobites from the **Hellraiser** films and (top) their creator*

In previous works, Barker has dropped hints and mentions of other worlds and characters from other works – including D'Amour's part in *The Art* trilogy, as well as a veiled reference to the Cenobites in the 1987 dark fantasy novel *Weaveworld*. It creates a tenuous cosmology – a Barkerverse, if you will – yet not necessarily a deliberate one.

"My initial response is that it's an 'Easter egg,' but something in me hesitates to say as much," says the author. "Maybe it will reveal itself to be more than that, but I don't know that it is right now. It hasn't expressed itself to me in that way. Not yet at least. For the time being, I just think it's fun more than anything else. I hope the readers do, too."

Although there will certainly be other iterations of the Cenobites in film and graphic novels, *The Scarlet Gospels* will be Barker's last words on Pinhead. The story they tell will ripple throughout upcoming works, specifically the conclusion of *The Art Trilogy*, in which Harry D'Amour has been such an integral part.

So where does Barker go from here, now that the pages of *The Gospels* have been closed?

"Damned if I know – no pun intended," he exclaims. "I genuinely don't know. But that's always been the fun of this for me. The excitement of writing is that I haven't got a clue what's going to happen next. If I did, all the joy would go out of it."

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AN AMBITIOUS BLEND OF 1980s CLASS CRITICISM AND OUTRAGEOUS PRE-CGI EFFECTS, BRIAN YUZNA'S NEWLY REISSUED SOCIETY FINALLY GETS ITS COMING-OUT PARTY

THE DROOLING CLASS

MICHAEL DOYLE

AH, THE 1980s – IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES. ARGUABLY THE WETTEST DECADE ON RECORD, THESE WERE THE EFFLORESCENT days of bladder effects, change-o-heads and methylcellulose, when bodily distortions of every aspect and slimy secretions of every consistency were as endemic as the Jheri curl, Rubik's Cube and acid-washed jeans. In an age that gifted us classic body horror chunk-blowers like *The Beast Within*, *The Thing* and *The Fly*, this period would culminate with a stomach-churning spectacle of transgressive depravity equal to anything attempted before in pre-CGI FX. That movie is *Society* (out on region-free Blu-ray from Arrow on May 18), Brian Yuzna's 1989's paranoiac parable for the incorrigible greed and extravagance of the Reagan years.

Filmed over seven weeks on a budget of under $2 million at locations found in and around Los Angeles, *Society* marked Yuzna's directorial debut after producing *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond* for Stuart Gordon. A burlesque coming-of-age horror story, its first hour plays like a restrained parody of a John Hughes movie – replete with stock teenagers all conceived to stereotype – before exploding with the infamous "shunting" sequence, an extended orgy of flesh, fluids and flatulence. Made at a time when genre films such as *They Live*, *Parents*, *Heathers* and *The 'Burbs* were challenging the quotidian coziness of Republican middle-class America, one could be forgiven for thinking that Yuzna was issuing an overwrought clarion call for the proletarian masses to revolt against the moneyed well-to-dos. Apparently not.

"I wasn't looking to deliver a Leftist commentary on America, as I was initially more drawn to the paranoid elements of Rick [Fry] and Woody [Keith's] script than its politics," the 65-year-old filmmaker contends. "In fact, I'd previously worked for a year on a project that Dan O'Bannon was going to direct called *The Men*, which was about a woman who discovers that all men are aliens. I really responded to the way that story depicted the world as a place where something was happening right in front of your nose, but you just didn't see it. I loved the growing realization characters had when they discovered the truth of what was going on all around them. Sadly, *The Men* didn't get made but I'd gotten attached to the idea of doing a movie about things hiding under

the surface. *Society* evoked those same feelings of paranoia and alienation, so it was very easy for me to jump right into doing the film."

Society revolves around mullet-headed rich kid Bill Whitney (Billy Warlock), who suspects that something is terribly wrong with his idyllic Beverly Hills family. His unease is exacerbated when his sister's ex-boyfriend, Blanchard (Tim Bartell), plays him a covert tape recording of his relatives discussing a sordid, incestuous cotillion ball. Bill gives the tape to his psychiatrist, but when the shrink later plays it back to him he hears only harmless domestic prattle. Blanchard is then killed in an accident, leading Bill to believe that a conspiracy exists involving his parents and their wealthy social circle. Warned away by local bad girl Clarissa (Devin DeVasquez), Bill returns home to confront his family but is captured by the waiting gentry. After learning that the high class clique are in fact shape-shifting monsters who prey on the underclasses, Bill realizes his entire life has been an elaborate ruse to ensure that his body is exhausted of its nutrients and essence in a grotesque ritual known as "the shunt."

"The original script for *Society* was that same story but it didn't contain the fantastical elements," reveals Yuzna. "It dealt with an elitist blood cult that was killing non-society members in some weird ceremony. Since I'm a fan of surrealistic and expressionistic cinema, I did not want to make a film about people simply getting murdered. I wanted to do something wildly imaginative, [featuring] makeup FX nobody had ever seen before. I then began working with the writers to develop a more fantastical version of the story and we came up with this image of flesh melding together. From that came the biological concept of 'shunting' and the idea that the members of society -- the bluebloods, the aristocrats -- were an entirely different species from humanity that were literally feasting on the poor."

Just as *They Live* submitted that the affluent are inhuman, Yuzna offers an intriguing theory as to the origins of his predatory elite, back "in the age of the caveman," instead of a monolith manifesting to impart wisdom to our ancestors -- as in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, -- a prehistoric parasite emerges from underground. This organism infects some of the troglodytes, allowing the parasite's host to dominate and manipulate the other members of the tribe. This effectively results in the infected becoming the chiefs and leaders of these primitive peoples, eventually inter-marrying with them in order to create "a literal blueblood." These contaminations occur in Africa, Europe and Asia, so that every trace of humanity has its own version of society that presides over the human race.

Ironically, despite his film detailing this secret class warfare, Yuzna declares that, in reality, many Americans don't believe that a class system exists in their country (in direct contrast to the UK and other parts of Europe where *Society* was a critical hit and social stratification is openly acknowledged). The director feels his compatriots prefer to embrace the myth of the American Dream and the freedom it supposedly offers than accept "the fact that our entire economy was built upon genocide and slavery." Although he agrees that hard work furnishes every citizen with an opportunity to make money, Yuzna asserts that any societal advancement occurs within certain restrictive boundaries as commoners are only permitted to climb *so far*.

"This is why the world of *Society* isn't just about money, it's about power and class," he argues. "When somebody makes a ton of money, that doesn't suddenly elevate them into the ruling class -- because you can't buy class! Acquiring great wealth merely exposes your poor taste and judgement more clearly. You are now *nouveau riche* as it takes many, many generations to become a part of the governing elite. In reality, a billionaire doesn't actually wield a lot of power as those individuals with the real power -- you don't know their names and you don't read about them in the newspapers. A lot of Americans don't realize that the true division that separates us is class. This is made clear in the movie when Bill's psychiatrist tells him that it's always a case of 'good breeding' as class is considered even more of a distinction than species!"

This discrepancy is never more apparent than during the slippery shunting sequence which registers as an unholy union of sodomy and cannibalism that is fatal to humans. Describing *Society* as a "one-joke sucker punch movie," Yuzna agrees that the film pivots alarmingly at the sight of Beverly Hills nobility disrobing and devolving into a polymorphous pile of molten flesh (courtesy of some extraordinary FX by Screaming Mad George - *Predator, A Nightmare on Elm Street 4, Bride of Re-Animator*). Shot at the GMT Studios in Culver City, California during the bell-lap of an exhausting schedule, this undulating conglomeration of twisted forms required twelve people to operate and was inspired by the surrealist paintings of Salvador Dali.

"Shooting the shunt was just a gas," chuckles Yuzna. "I mean, to get all those extras to act like *that* was a lot of fun. There was something won-



Body Melt: *Society member Jenny (Patrice Jennings) contorts to get at those hard-to-reach places and (top) Ferguson (Ben Meyerson) loses face during his fight with Bill*

> **"THERE WAS SOMETHING WONDERFUL ABOUT SEEING NAKED 60-YEAR-OLDS COVERED IN SLIME AND RUBBER, EATING SPAGHETTI AND SLIDING AROUND"**
>
> **- BRIAN YUZNA**



Stretch Marks: *(left to right) The Beverly Hills elite engage in the orgiastic delights of shunting, Bill's father morphs into a literal butthead and (below) Dr Cleveland makes a point by transforming his head into a giant hand*

derful about seeing naked 60-year-olds covered in slime and rubber, eating spaghetti and sliding around in some ways I'm sure it was a liberating experience for them, because people love to get crazy like that. I think that delirious feeling is something I've tried to inject into a lot of my movies – probably to a fault. My own personal tastes are certainly not mainstream, so I loved the complete madness and excess of that sequence. I always thought the shunting provided a great ending for the film, but when you get to the point where people have lost all their inhibitions like that – it's fantastic!"

This veritable Delicatessen of pliable people climaxes with Bill ramming his fist up the rectum of his obnoxious nemesis, Ferguson (Ben Meyerson), and seizing his skull by the eye sockets before literally pulling him inside out. Yet, preview audiences were more disgusted by the kiss Billy Warlock and Ryerson share during their climactic confrontation than the severity of the anal trauma imagery.

"What can I say?" says Yuzna. "The 1980s was a different era in terms of our attitude and tolerance. I'm sure that kiss did upset some people and was interpreted as being a homosexual act, but it wasn't intended that way. It just seemed the right thing to do at that particular moment. Certain critics also focussed on the moment Bill shoves his fist up Ferguson's asshole, but that was not consciously constructed to be a gay thing either. I was simply thinking, 'What can I do here that'll take this sequence even further? How can I end this fight in a uniquely dramatic and visceral way?' Unfortunately, some of the reviews – such as the one in *Variety* – dismissed *Society* as 'rough trade gay porno,' while in France they labelled the movie 'sodomy gore.'"



Another extraordinary rectal moment occurs when Bill notices his father's sweaty face protruding from his anus and calmly exclaiming, "You're right, son, I am a butthead!" For Yuzna, the gag was just too good to pass up.

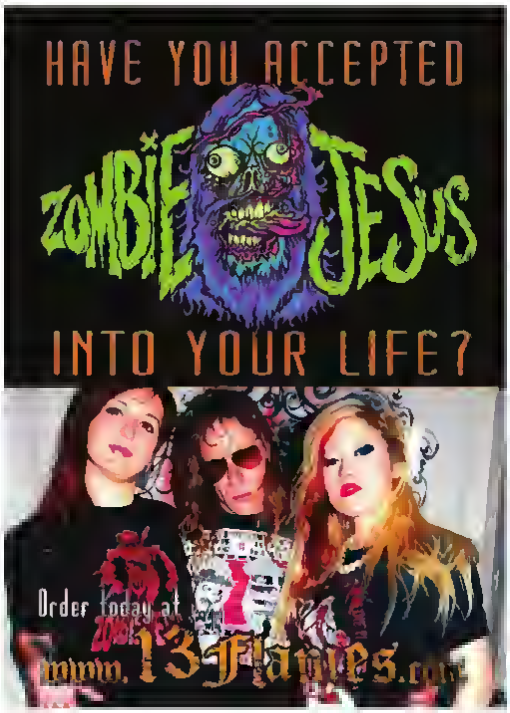
"Screaming Mad George and I invented the term 'psycho-fiction' to describe what we were doing in *Society*," he explains. "In effect, this approach involved making the unreal appear real, and the butthead is a perfect illustration of that. The concept of shunting gave us enormous freedom to realize any crazy idea we had – like the psychiatrist suddenly appearing with a big hand on his shoulders instead of a head. The butthead was an outrageous image, but it captured the disgust and fear that Bill feels about his family. We originally had even more weird stuff in that sequence where the butthead started singing, 'Where have you been, darlin' Billy! Dum-da-da-dum, da-da-dum!' I wish I could find that footage and put it [on the Blu-ray] as an extra."

A queasy meditation on the "greed is good" philosophy that transcends its soapy veneer, *Society* could have borrowed its title from Paul Bartel's *Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills* (also released in 1989). As a horror film, it's hard for any cineaste worth his or her weight in food stamps not to warm to a picture that embraces the themes of incest (which Yuzna considers to be "the fundamental root of all horror stories"), alienation and sexual perversity with such unadulterated fervency. Currently toiling on a sequel to *Society* (that he jokingly calls *The Revenge of the One Percent*), Yuzna hopes the second instalment will be an equally potent blend of heavy-handed satire and sticky surrealism.

"*Society* is an unusual film," he concludes with astonishing understatement. "When it first came out, I thought, 'Oh, this movie is going to be so popular! People are going to love it!' Unfortunately, that wasn't the case, as it was a big failure in the US. All of my friends were suddenly acting like I had contracted some disease – I mean, we just didn't talk about what happened – but over the years, *Society* seems to have been rediscovered by American audiences. That gives me tremendous pleasure as this movie is very dear to my heart. It seems to have legs whereas a lot of the movies I made afterwards – that were better received and made more money – simply don't. They have almost been forgotten, but it appears that *Society* is here to stay."

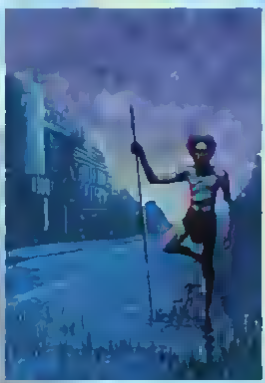






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THIS MONTH, TOM HODGE, A.K.A. THE DUDE DESIGNS, DROPS A MONSTER ART BOOK DEDICATED TO THE COOLEST VHS COVERS ANALOG GENRE GEEKS LOVE TO OGLE

DIARY OF A TAPEHEAD

by TAL ZIMERMAN



AS OF LATE, THE LANDSCAPE OF HORROR HOME VIDEO ART HAS BEEN REPOPULATED WITH THE OLD SCHOOL VHS AESTHETIC THAT CAPTIVATED SO MANY FANS EARLY ON. From niche labels such as Arrow and Scream Factory, all the way up to heavy-hitters like MGM, which recently repackaged classic properties with new handmade designs (originally commissioned by Ottawa outfit Skuzzles), more and more companies are getting in on the act. There are films, both narrative and documentary, dedicated to VHS, not to mention several fanzines, blogs and books that cover the topic. Even American Ivy league university Yale recently commenced with a project aiming to study the format's peak era and preserve its artefacts, the most precious of which are the tape covers.



At the best of times, these covers tell a story of their own, promising absurdly exaggerated and shockingly graphic versions of the contents inside – a hair-raising approach to marketing genre films has been all but lost. And while it's impossible to pinpoint the exact moment at which the style began to make a major comeback, several roads point to Tom "The Dude Designs" Hodge's game changing poster design for 2011's *Hobo With A Shotgun*.

Since that time, the Leicester, UK-based designer has been hammering out some of the craziest, catchiest movie art, making a name for himself as one of the most well respected (and imitated) illustrators in the business. Hodge's latest venture, however, sees him celebrating the works of others in the form a 264-page hardcover coffee







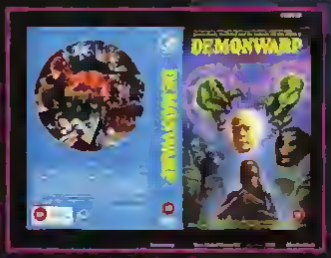








table book from Schiffer Publishing titled *VHS: Video Cover Art*. Out May 28th, it's loaded with full-plate pictures of classic covers – the DNA chart of his influences.

"A generation has grown up never seeing this sort of artwork related to films before," Hodge tells *Rue Morgue*. "These covers were the face of the movies for me growing up. I loved going and renting out videos to watch at the weekend, browsing the rows and rows of boxes with their awesome artwork. It was something which I found so visually potent that it ingrained itself into my psyche forever."

Significantly, *VHS: Video Cover Art* looks beyond the front of the VHS box to span the whole spectrum of illustration, design, typography and copy-writing of a release, and contains plates featuring rear covers as well as the spines which, for Hodge, are all essential components of the video cover.

"I didn't want to sanitize them in any way for the viewer," he insists, "and I've preserved every single frayed edge, sticker, and rental price tag. These are the things that give each cover its individual personality, and show the history of each tape. That's also how I remembered seeing the boxes on the video store shelves, all worn and sun-bleached in places. So I felt strongly that the covers should be displayed as *objets d'art*."

Roughly half of the images found in *VHS: Video Cover Art* are from Hodge's personal stash, and the rest from fellow collectors, though that number rises to three quarters in the author's favour for the horror section which, incidentally, represents the largest part of the book ("There are even some horror covers spilled into the thriller and sci-fi sections!," he notes). Though his enthusiasm for vintage VHS art is obvious, Hodge is not just championing the artwork, he's celebrating the artists too.

"Everyone now knows Drew Struzan, who I love of course," he says of the popular American poster artist behind *The Thing* and *Squirm*, "but what about Enzo Sciotti, Renato and Caudio Casaro, Laurent Melki among many others?"

As keen as The Dude is to honour the past, there is also some frustration given his role in the very industry which is at the focus of his book. For Hodge, the world of key art is plagued by a top-down desire for expediency, an attitude which, he says, frequently short changes illustrators.

"I put out *VHS: Video Cover Art* to introduce and inspire a new generation of designers and illustrators, and maybe even marketing people to [revive] this largely lost art-form," says Hodge. "I really wanted to bring these artists to the forefront again as well as highlighting their amazing art. It's an important history to know about if you are interested in films or limited edition prints."

And speaking of limited prints, the book's Foreword comes courtesy of Justin Ishmael, head of poster powerhouse Mondo.

"Justin is a massive VHS addict too – the man has a VHS tattoo," Hodge says of Ishmael, with whom he worked to create the illustration for Paul Feig's 2013 comedy *The Heat*.

In the book's intro, Ishmael offers up his own history with the format and his thoughts on its significance. "As convenient as digital media is, it does not come close to having the same feeling as physically walking into a video store and being submerged in movies and art. I really think that without video stores and VHS (specifically the art), I wouldn't be here today. It seems silly, but I credit VHS as one of my largest inspirations and teachers."

Of course, even if you aren't the kind to rewind and revel in the past glories of analog media, Hodge promises that the eye candy in *VHS: Video Cover Art* stands on its own.

"It's money shot after money shot of total unadulterated complete VHS art glory!"

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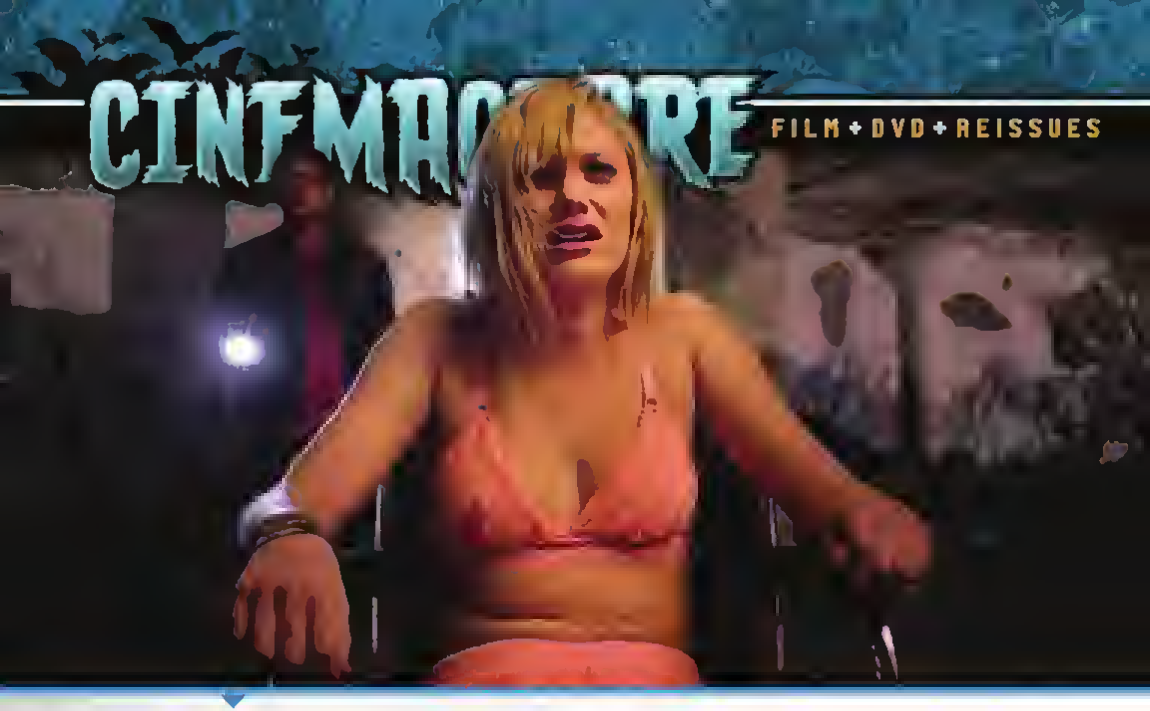
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HELLHOUND ON YOUR TRAIL

IT FOLLOWS

Starring Maika Monroe, Keir Gilchrist and Olivia Luccardi
Written and directed by David Robert Mitchell
Mongrel Media

Films like *Phantasm*, *Prince of Darkness*, the original Japanese *Pulse* and much of David Lynch's filmography achieve that literal nightmare feeling of logic being clawed away by something reaching up from the subconscious. *It Follows* doesn't claw as much as it steadfastly pursues – hence the title – but it's effectively nightmarish in its own way.

Based on a recurring bad dream suffered by writer-director David Robert Mitchell, the suburbs-set film uses a very basic – *Nightmare on Elm Street*-influenced – premise to terrify: what if a shape-shifting something that no one else could see pursued you relentlessly? Maika Monroe (*The Guest*) stars as Jay, a suburban teen who goes out on a date with Hugh (Jake Weary). After a shag on the bench seat of his car, he drugs her, ties her to a chair and drops a bomb. No, he's not a Nickelback fan – slightly worse: he's passed along a sexually transmitted curse for which the recipient is pursued by a murderous, shape-shifting entity. It can take the form of a stranger or someone familiar, it can only be seen by its target or someone it's targeted before, it can only walk but never rests, and if it kills its victim, it moves back up the line to whoever infected that person.



So you can run but you can't hide, or barely rest, and you need to pass it along to someone who can hopefully do the same before getting hate-fucked by the thing. With the help of her Scooby Gang of neighbourhood pals, Jay evades and eventually tries to destroy the entity – all to the driving beat of a spectacular score by Disasterpiece.

It Follows presents an endless nightmare scenario that's simple and effective. Less effective, though, is Mitchell's attempt at a timeless setting. With a dreamy nostalgic atmosphere similar to his previous feature, *The Myth of the American Sleepover*, most of the movie screams '70s/'80s, except for some modern cars, a cell phone at the beginning and a clamshell e-reader thing one of the characters uses. It's a distracting bit of *Jetsons* tech that the filmmaker apparently invented for the movie that adds nothing.

Some of the plot is similarly perplexing (what happened with Jay and the guys on the motorboat?). And no, films don't need to explain everything – we never find out if gay sex or condoms affect the curse, for example – but why confuse your audience when you're already doing a helluva job scaring the pants off of 'em?

DAVE ALEXANDER

GREATEST STORY EVER MOULD

MOTIVATIONAL GROWTH

Starring Jeffrey Combs, Adrian DiGiovanni and Danielle Doetsch
Written and directed by Don Thacker
Parade Deck Films

Trying to describe Don Thacker's *Motivational Growth* to someone who hasn't seen it is sort of like describing red to a blind person. It is an unapologetically bizarre hour and forty-four minutes laden with practical effects so realistic and disgusting that each scene will squeeze your stomach into knots, begging the question, "Can this movie get any stranger?" But in spite of its bleak, mouldy aesthetic, this is a highly stylized piece with an incomparable script that makes it one of the most unique films you can get your filthy paws on right now.

Ian Follivor (Adrian DiGiovanni) is a loner. Barricaded in his apartment amongst years of dirt, grime and a fear of the great outdoors, he spends his days with his only company, Kent, his television set. After Kent unexpectedly dies, Ian realizes that all he has left to occupy his time is each precious moment that he goes to the bathroom for a bowel movement. Once this dark reality sets in, Ian decides to kill himself. When his attempt at suicide is thwarted by a nasty fall causing him to smash his head off of his bathtub, he wakes up to find that the festering growth of mould on his wall has become sentient (voiced by Jeffrey Combs), and it informs him that it's



Motivational Growth

going to help him get his life in order, no matter the drastic measures that might need to be taken.

The writing and cinematography in *Motivational Growth* work in perfect harmony with each other, depicting Ian's bizarre journey to self-respect through shifts in the intensity of the narrative and in the colours of particular scenes. Aiding the overall cohesiveness is the fact that Thacker's characters are exceptionally portrayed by DiGiovanni and Combs, who present an Odd Couple for a new generation of viewers in love with bad taste. Whether it's unexpected gory blood baths, gallons of mossy vomit or Ian suckling from a mould-sprouted teat with hallucinogenic properties, this twisted narrative is unmatched in its pursuit of insanity. *Motivational Growth* may gross out even the most seasoned viewer, but even they will have to admit that it is as hilarious as it is unsettling.



RICHELLE CHARKOT

BLACK SABBATICAL

ANGELS OF DARKNESS

Starring Eleanor Tomlinson, Julia Pietrucha and Stephen Rea
Written and directed by Mauricio Chernavetsky and Mark Devendorf
Revolver

For over 200 years Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* has been adapted for stage, screen and print. In cinema, the gothic novella about lesbian vampires was remade by Hammer as *The Vampire Lovers*, by Roger Vadim as *Blood and Roses*, and even Christopher Lee appeared in a version titled *Crypt of the Vampire*. Mauricio Chernovetsky and Mark Devendorf's *Angels of Darkness* moves the story from 19th century Austria to the similarly authoritarian Iron Curtain era of the late-'80s and layers on the emotional and the supernatural thicker than petticoats on a 19th century Englishwoman.

When troubled Lara (Eleanor Tomlinson) gets kicked out of prep school, her father (Stephen Rea) takes her along on his academic sabbatical to Styria, Hungary, where he's studying the ancient murals that adorn the walls of the mysterious, condemned Karnstein Castle. The locals are less than friendly to their British guests, and Lara's strained relationship with her father provides little respite from the tension. When she witnesses Carmilla (Julia Pietrucha) fleeing the lecherous General Spiegel (Jacek Lenartowicz), the two begin a complex and intimate friendship. Carmilla seems to know all the secrets and mysteries of the Castle, and lures Lara into late-night slumber parties and skinny dips. Meanwhile, the young women of the nearby town have started to go mad and commit suicide, and the locals blame Lara and her dad. Lara discovers that the secrets of the Castle have strange parallels to her own sordid family history, and that Carmilla has much more to offer her than friendship.

The film's slow pace may alienate some viewers, but those predisposed to the gothic will make much of the foggy, atmospheric setting and the dark dream sequences loaded with symbolic imagery. Chernovetsky and Devendorf avoid the easy, sexploitative route of a teen-lesbian vampire thriller in favour of an interesting amalgam of vampire and witchcraft mythology, making for the most novel portrayal of the monstrous, bloodthirsty feminine since 2008's *Let The Right One In*. The slow-burning mystery and the gothic artwork amid the crumbling architecture in *Angels of Darkness* are intoxicating to say the least, so sip slowly and savour it.



ANDREA SUBISSATI

BEAR ESSENTIALS

BACKCOUNTRY

Starring Missy Peregrym, Jeff Roop and Eric Balfour
Written and directed by Adam MacDonald
IFC

We humans are so sure of our place in the food chain that we socialize our own offspring to be friendly with deadly predators – particularly bears. We give them plush teddys to sleep with, read them stories about Pooh and show them cartoons about Yogi. Reality check: bears are not for snuggling, they don't wear sweaters or comically snatch picnic baskets – they are big, bad predators which, if given the chance, will swat your face off, gargle your brains and poop out your eyes.



Adam MacDonald gets it. The writer/director of *Backcountry* has made a film that hones in on the absolute horror of becoming prey. City types Jenn (Missy Peregrym) and Alex (Jeff Roop) go for a camping trip in the wilds of Ontario. The tension in their relationship simmers when he insists they leave their phones behind, begins to bubbles when a strange loner named Brad (Eric Balfour) joins them for dinner one night and finally boils over when they find themselves lost in the territory of a particularly large black bear that wants its lunch wrapped in fleece and Gore-Tex.

Backcountry is a simpler story than your average Hollywood nature survival thriller in which a manly hero is lost in a spectacular way and must use his cunning to escape a vicious predator (*The Edge*, *The Grey*), and it's not a monster movie that portrays animals as seemingly unstoppable killing machines (*Grizzly*, *Day of the Animals*). Instead, MacDonald keeps things very realistic, which makes his movie that much more gripping. These are average people

being hunted by a regular bear, and when the animal strikes, there's no heroic struggle, just an indifferent predator feeding and the full horror of that realization – slammed home with some unflinchingly hideous gore effects.

The filmmaker also performs some clever misdirection with his characters and casting choices, as just the mere presence of the recognizable Balfour (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* remake, *Skyline*) encourages certain expectations. It's all in service of a climax steeped in white knuckle bear terror... or *bearror*.

Now, do you still feel like reading *The Teddy Bear's Picnic*?

DAVE ALEXANDER

SPLASHER MOVIE

THE DROWNSMAN

Starring Michelle Mylett, Caroline Korycki and Ry Barrett
Directed by Chad Archibald
Written by Chad Archibald and Cody Calahan
Anchor Bay

It's not easy to make a horror icon. For every Pinhead, Michael Myers and Freddy Krueger, horror fans suffer through countless unmemorable villains from forgettable movies. After all, it is not the filmmaker but the audience that ultimately decides which movie monsters enter horror history and which wind up on the direct-to-video dung heap.

Give credit to *Drownsman* co-writers (and Black Fawn Film principals) Chad Archibald and Cody Calahan for trying to come up with a new horror antihero. Unfortunately, with Sebastian Donner – a.k.a. The Drownsman – they don't create much of a splash.



Michelle Mylett (*Antisocial*), plays Madison, a young woman who develops a phobia of water after a near-drowning leaves her with visions of a water-logged behemoth. One year later, her frustrated friends stage an intervention involving a medium. That turns out to not be such a good idea, as that hulking boogeyman, a supernatural serial killer named The Drownsman (Ry Barrett, also of *Antisocial*), starts stalking Madison and her friends.

The victims are thinly-written characters portrayed by young, inexperienced actors who die in inventive ways, thanks to Archibald (who also directs) and Calahan's idea that the Drowsman can use any form of water – even a small spill – as a conduit to grab his victims.

As to the Drownsman himself, Barrett's immense physicality is impressive, he has the heft of a monster, and comes across like a water-logged Swamp Thing with the silent menace of Michael Myers. The hint of a cool back story (Donner, we are told, was in the womb for eighteen months and drowns his victims to recreate the experience) makes for an intriguing sequel idea, if there's still, ahem, water in the well after this.

SEAN PLUMMER



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GOES FORWARDS AND BACKWOODS

I AM NOT GROOT



SCARECROW

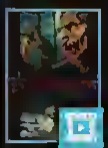
Cinedigm

Writer/director Sheldon Wilson has been on my radar since 2007 when I came across *Kaw*, his movie about a farming community attacked by ravens. This time, he takes us to a town where some kids on weekend detention are doing grunt work on a farm that's reportedly haunted. Before you can say "Molly Ringwald," the backwoods breakfast club is attacked by a CG-rendered creature that looks like a cross between Groot and Ghostface but nothing like an actual scarecrow. Made for the SyFy channel, it has some decent gore sandwiched between scenes featuring the heaving breasts of Lacey Chabert (*Black Christmas* remake). Too bad *Scarecrow* is missing one key thing ... an actual scarecrow!

BODY COUNT: 15

BEST OFF-SCREEN KILL: Cutie crunched by a combine

SQUATCHER IN THE WOODS



EYES OF THE WOODS

Central Film Company

With all the hillbillies, cannibals, escaped prisoners and Sasquatches roaming the countryside, I'm surprised anyone goes in the woods at all, let alone stays overnight. But that's just what the five idiots in this film must do after their van breaks down. They decide to hump through the hills looking for help and find themselves the target of a creature that preys on backpackers, hunters and B-movie actors. Though it boasts some solid creature F/X, the plot, dialogue, camerawork and sound editing are horrible, probably because there were three different directors here, each with a different vision. The next time these guys go into the woods, they should hope Bigfoot shows up with a map!

BODY COUNT: 24

BEST OFF-SCREEN KILL: Topless blonde girl gored to death

HARM-PIT



JUG FACE

Modern Distributors

Seldom do I get to gush about one of the movies in this column, I hardly know where to start. *Jug Face* follows a beautiful girl named Ada who's a member of a backwoods community that shuns modern society and willingly give their lives as sacrifices to a pit filled with murky liquid. Pregnant with her brother's baby and about to be married off to one of the local yokels, she discovers that she's the next sacrifice. Sexy, scary and intelligent, this film is a wholly original, beautifully shot masterpiece written and directed by Chad Crawford Kinkle, in his horror feature debut. Let's just hope he stays away from the SyFy channel!

BODY COUNT: 7

BEST OFF-SCREEN KILL: Pop pulled apart in the pit

LAST CHANCE LANCE

LOST SOUL: THE DOOMED JOURNEY OF RICHARD STANLEY'S THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU REVEALS THAT WHEN IT COMES TO HOLLYWOOD, MAN REALLY IS AN ANIMAL

INTO THE HEART OF DARKNESS

BY MICHEL E. GALGANA



DRUG AND ALCOHOL-FUELLED PARTIES. A WARLOCK CASTING PROTECTION SPELLS. Val Kilmer sabotaging Richard Stanley and getting him fired after just three days on set. Marlon Brando covering himself with white paint and cheese cloth, and wearing a bucket on his head. Stanley sneaking back on set disguised as a dog man.

These are but a few of the events that occurred during the production of the savagely panned 1996 H.G. Wells adaptation *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. David Gregory's new documentary *Lost Soul: The Doomed Journey of Richard Stanley's The Island of Dr. Moreau* – out May 12, from Severin Films – delves into what went wrong with first-hand recollections from cast and crew – notably Stanley and lead actress Fairuza Balk. It's a jaw-dropping, hilarious and sobering look into the famously botched film.

Both Gregory and Stanley open up about the documentary.

***What's the genesis of* Lost Soul?**

David Gregory: My distribution label, Severin Films, released a special edition of [Stanley's 1990 feature] *Hardware*, and we got Richard back into narrative filmmaking with *The Theatre Bizarre* anthology. After that, we became pretty good friends, and... I just threw it out there. "What happened with *The Island of Dr. Moreau*?" That's a question he got a lot – it was always surrounded by rumor and myth. He just started talking and it went into the night, and I told him, "We should film you talking about it. You have very vivid memories, and you're not excruciatingly angry about it."



You developed* Dr. Moreau *for years. For the record, what happened with you getting fired?

Richard Stanley: I think they came to that conclusion before I even came to set. They announced that they were doing the film with Roman Polanski. I suspect that if I had been older and wiser, I would have accepted that at the beginning. I at least would have been the screenwriter on a Polanski movie and not on the John Frankenheimer movie, which bore no resemblance to the actual script.

Neither Val Kilmer nor anyone from the Brando estate speaks in the doc. Have you had any communication with them?

DG: I really wanted to get [Kilmer's] take. He's gone on record, on *Letterman* or something, where they asked him, "Is it true that you can bring down an entire production like *The Island of Dr. Moreau*?" He just laughed and said, "Yes. It's true." I'm paraphrasing, but it was along those lines. But unfortunately, I didn't even get a "no," even after approaching him through six or seven channels.

Is it true Brando went on set naked from the waist down?

DG: I think what the production designer Grace Walker actually said was that he first went into the production trailer to meet Brando, who was regaling the crew with tales from movies. He said that it was, "One of the most privileged positions to be in, but on the other hand, Brando was sitting in very loose boxer shorts and his testicles were hanging out."

Richard, what was the weirdest part of getting dressed up as the dog man and going back to set after you'd been banned?

RS: Being around people and them not knowing I was there, particularly Fairuza, who I'd lived with for two years before production, and then not being legally allowed within 40 kilometers of her on set. It was a fairy tale in a way, of being transformed. It was such a paranoid time. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out who was lying to who, and who was pretending to friends with other people.

Watching* Lost Soul *with an audience now, do you feel a sense of catharsis?

RS: It's interesting, I can see more clearly who's lying and who was doing what to who, and who feels bad about things. The layers of subterfuge become clearer. You take the old things in your life that you have no more use for, the things that hurt you the most, tidy them together and sell them to the public for entertainment. It's what filmmakers do all the time, but it works, especially in genre. We take the most painful, difficult experiences we've had and recycle them. This is an extreme example.

Do you believe the production was cursed?

RS: Who knows? It's kissing cousins with *Heart of Darkness*, which Orson Welles wanted to make as his first movie, which had its problems as well. For some reason, adapting either *Dr. Moreau* or *Heart of Darkness* has defeated generations of filmmakers. No one's really succeeded in doing it yet. I'm not sure if that's a curse or if there's something inherent in the material that brings out the animal in people.

REISSUES



BRAVO ON THE BAVA

BLOOD AND BLACK LACE (1964) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Cameron Mitchell, Eva Bartok and Thomas Reiner
Directed by Mario Bava
Written by Marcello Fondato, Giuseppe Barilla and Mario Bava
Arrow

Not content with inventing opera, radio and the telephone, the Italians also formulated the irreducible template for the "body count" slasher film with Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace*. Although it wasn't the first giallo to be made, the subgenre's cinematic currents can be traced to this cardinal source in which all of its hallmarks effectively coalesced.



This lurid milestone begins with the brutal murder of a model employed at a chic Haute Couture fashion house managed by the recently widowed Countessa Cristina Como (Eva Bartok) and her associate, Max Marlan (Cameron Mitchell). The subsequent discovery of the victim's diary, coupled with the arrival of the plodding Inspector Silvester (Thomas Reiner), spreads panic amongst the salon's staff, which fears being implicated in a sex and drugs scandal. One by one, a masked maniac stalks and kills all who come into possession of the incriminating journal, leaving a growing pile of exquisite corpses in his – or her – wake.

Oscillating between the sadistic and the sublime, elements of *Blood and Black Lace* may appear shrill and over-familiar – possibly inviting a cynical response from some modern viewers – but the unaffected genius and vivacity Bava exhibits from the gaudy title sequence onwards is undeniable. Other directors may have ploughed the same bloody furrows in ensuing decades, but few have matched the fluid dance of light and shadow, colour and camera movement on display here. In his tinkering with the entrenched mechanics of the whodunit, Bava succeeded in creating a new language for the horror film – one whose decorative gestures, modes and motifs would adorn the genre for the next 50 years.

Aside from delivering a gorgeously restored print, Arrow's new Blu-ray yields an unstinting cornucopia of extras, crowned by the feature-length documentary Psycho-Analysis, which examines *Blood and Black Lace* and the origins of giallo, and boasts contributions from Dario Argento and Lamberto Bava. Add to this an edifying commentary by *Video Watchdog* editor Tim Lucas, a ten-minute appreciation by *Amer* directors Hélène Cattet and Bruno Forzani, a panel discussion on Bava recorded at last year's Courmayeur Noir Film Festival (again featuring Argento), plus some additional baubles – including Ryan Haysom's stylish neo-giallo short *Yellow* – and you have the finest home video release of 2015 thus far.

MICHAEL DOYLE

"I'LL DRIVE-A DA TANKER"

EXTERMINATORS OF THE YEAR 3000 (1983)

Starring Robert Iannucci, Alicia Moro and Luca Venantini
Directed by Giuliano Carnimeo
Written by Elisa Briganti, Dardano Sacchetti and Jose Truchado
Shout! Factory

"Meet the new breed of Road Warriors" – if you actually name-check the movie you're ripping off in your own tagline, you've elevated shameless to an art form, and that's what the Italian film industry has long excelled at. So let's review *Road Warrior* rip-off *Exterminators of the Year 3000* on those terms.



Also released as *Death Warriors*, the 1983 film takes place in a post-apocalyptic wasteland where both water and fuel are in short supply. It's a place where roving gangs of thugs – who look like they didn't make the cut for the Village People because of too much sports equipment – rip around in modified, weaponized vehicles, stopping mostly to rape, kill and steal. Enter a benevolent community that needs a hero as bad as it needs H20, and a capable loner with his own weaponized car who reluctantly agrees to shepherd their tanker to an oasis. With the help of a tough kid and a feisty babe, our leather-clad ass-kicker fights his way down Hell's dusty highway.

That plot is – wow – embarrassingly familiar, but since you can't give a screenwriting credit to a Xerox machine, and director Giuliano Carnimeo (working here as "Jules Harrison") didn't have the resources to make something as accomplished as *The Road Warrior*, the filmmakers added extra garnish to this saucy impastor. *Exterminators of the Year 3000* boasts disfigured toxic mutants, a robotic arm capable of throwing a rock right into someone's skull, random haunted house skeletons, a steady regimen of huge explosions, headbands and some extra gore. Not a bad trade-off for Mel Gibson.

And yes, there's more production value in the trailer for the upcoming *Mad Max* reboot than in all of this film, but it does have its cheesy, wonky charms (did I mention the skeletons?). To help enshrine it for future generations, Shout! Factory



has cleaned it up and ported over a couple of extras from the 2010 Code Red re-release, you can hear how star Robert Iannucci held up the production in order to get paid and other not-so surprising tales from the film's production.

As far as rip-offs go, *Exterminators of the Year 3000* might not blow your Thunderdome, but it ain't no Sad Max, either.

DAVE ALEXANDER

SLEAZED TO MEET YA

MARK OF THE DEVIL (1970) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Udo Kier, Herbert Lom and Olivera Vuco
Directed by Michael Armstrong
Written by Michael Armstrong and Adrian Hoven
Arrow

Mark of the Devil is undoubtedly sleazy. Conceived as a knockoff of 1968's *Witchfinder General*, it revels in scenes of beautiful, often naked, young women being tortured by ugly men with uglier hearts. Appropriately, the film's American distributor offered patrons free vomit bags emblazoned with the promise/warning "Guaranteed to upset your stomach."

But *Mark of the Devil* is also damn good. It boasts superior production values (it was shot in beautiful, remote parts of Austria), awful villains in Herbert Lom (*Murders in the Rue Morgue*), as a corrupt bishop, and Reggie Nalder (*Salem's Lot*) as an evil witch finder, and a script that lays bare the church's exploitative, corrupt and misogynist nature. Even blank-faced newcomer Udo Kier, playing Lom's pretty acolyte, can't spoil the morally deplorable fun. Audiences loved it, critics spat on it, and its violence – including a nasty tongue extraction – got it banned in multiple countries.



Success aside, *MotD* has a spotty post-release history. Most VHS and DVD versions were sourced from degraded prints and excised various bits of sex and gore. But UK-based Arrow Films has brought back all the boobs and blood in a glorious transfer that makes the film's reds that much redder. A terrific trove of bonus features makes this the film's definitive release.

Chief among the extras is a lively commentary with director Michael Armstrong moderated by journalist Calum Waddell. Armstrong details his art-versus-commerce struggles with actor/producer Adrian Hoven, who took over directing close to the end of the shoot and locked Armstrong out of post-production. Further details of their contentious relationship can be found in a candid interview with Herbert Fux who played a particularly enthusiastic torturer. Kier, by comparison, appears bored and openly hostile in his interview.

The set's other featurettes are top-notch, including *Mark of the Times*, a fascinating look at Britain's early-'70s horror boom, and *Hallmark of the Devil*, a reminiscence about Hallmark, the American distributor responsible for *MotD*'s outrageous ad campaign and for importing much Eurosleaze into American cinemas back in the day.

This digitally-spiffed version of *Mark of the Devil* is about as close to respectable as this unclassy classic will ever get.

SEAN PLUMMER

BRUNO'S BLOODY GOOD-BYE

ISLAND OF THE LIVING DEAD (2007)

Starring Yvette Yzon, Gaetano Russo and Alvin Anson
Directed by Bruno Mattei
Written by Antonio Tenori, Giovanni Paolucci and Bruno Mattei

ZOMBIES: THE BEGININGING (2007)

Starring Yvette Yzon, Alvin Anson and Paul Holme
Directed by Bruno Mattei
Written by Antonio Tentori and Giovanni Paolucci
Intervision

Bruno Mattei ain't no Dario or Lucio, but his bad movies have made for some good times. Watch his remarkably shameless *Dawn of the Dead* rip-off *Hell of the Living Dead* (1980) or the bizarre *Zombie 3* (1988) with a few inebriated pals and you'll know what I mean. The late filmmaker was there during Italy's heyday of gore cinema, and that authenticity is what makes Intervision's release of his final films, *Island of the Living Dead* and *Zombies: The Beginning* so special.

In a dramatic first sequence, *Island* opens in the 1600s, on a Spanish colony in the Pacific Islands. The natives and conquistadors alike are succumbing to a curse that sees the dead returning to life to devour the living. Forward to present time (which, thanks to video stock and some really odd wardrobe choices looks more like 1997), a group of dough-headed treasure hunters find the island and investigate in search of gold, but naturally the living dead (from lumbering headless bodies to fanged, feral humanoids) are there to spoil their fun. The crew's lone survivor Sharon (Yvette Yzon) narrowly escapes on a MacGyvered raft.

Zombies: The Beginning (Mattei's final film) starts with Sharon's rescue, before placing her before the bosses at the Tyler Corporation, who snuffle in disbelief at her outrageous story of Spanish gold and the zombies that protect it. Fired, she takes refuge amongst a Buddhist congregation, trying in vain to curb the nightmares that have been plaguing her since her brush with the living dead. Several months later, she returns to the island with a dozen soldiers, only to find that the company has been experimenting on the ghouls, creating a new species of creature. At this point, *Zombies* becomes a full-blown *Aliens* retread, complete with wisecracking marines, chestoursting and a kick-ass lady who isn't shy with the old flamethrower.





Bruno Mattei's late-phase playbook had no place for post-*28 Days Later* zombie antics, so absent are screeching undead athletes and social commentary. No nu-metal, no hyper-editing and no Hollywood stars. Instead, *Island of the Living Dead* and *Zombies: The Beginning* favour old-school ghouls, ancient curses, secret islands and practical gore effects that wouldn't be out of place in any proper Italian gutmuncher. Mattei never seemed to learn anything in the last 30-odd years, and given today's climate of big-budget snoozers, hipster satires and soulless cash-ins, that's a very good thing.

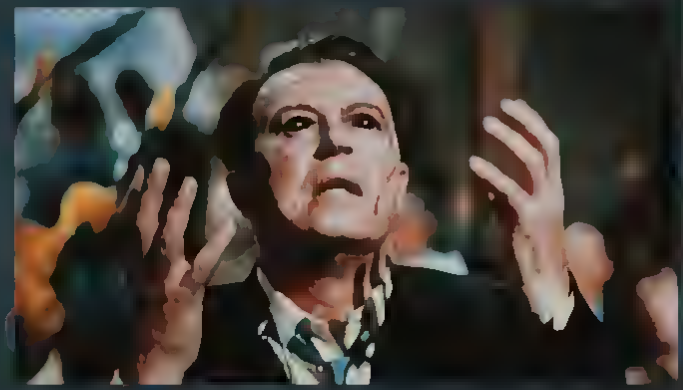
Rest in peace, Bruno!

TAL ZIMERMAN

THE

LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILE: *Eyes of the Beholder* by Paul Corupe



One of the few horror films to explore the never-ending search for meaning beyond blind faith, Roger Corman's *X: The Man with the X-Ray Eyes* is an unflinching look at religion and science that isn't afraid to ask the big questions, even though some of its answers may be unsettling. On one level, this 1963 horror classic is an archetypal tale of a mad scientist tampering in "God's domain," but the film pushes this premise to rarely-seen lengths as it follows the character's fall from grace as a leading research technician to a sideshow curiosity. It's a tragic, nihilist nightmare that also ponders the physical and psychological ramifications of such an unprecedented breakthrough. And now this colourfully psychedelic, metaphysical vision of has received a much-needed Blu-ray upgrade, courtesy of Kino.

The film begins as scientist Dr. Xavier (Ray Milland) reveals that he has developed special chemical eye-drops intended to increase the range of human vision. Administering the liquid to himself, he only manages to see through paper at first, but his x-ray eyes continue to get stronger with each dose. Eventually, he's able to look through skin directly into the bodies of hospital patients. When he confronts a surgeon who has dangerously misdiagnosed a girl, it leads to an altercation that accidentally causes the physician's death. Now on the run from the law, Xavier finds some respite laying low as a mentalist in a carnival, reading audience questions through a blindfold, until the disreputable barker (Don Rickles) learns of his powers and sets him up in an office to give medical diagnoses to worried old women. Tracked down by love interest Dr. Fairfax (Diane Van der Vlis), Xavier confesses the strange sights he's plagued by – a world of skeletal death and blinding kaleidoscopic lights that plague his every moment.



Where many mad scientist films only superficially explore the breakthrough discovered – shrinking humans or being turned into a fly-headed man is largely just an excuse to focus on the doctor's downfall – *X: The Man with the X-Ray Eyes* is notable for the way it thoughtfully probes what it would be like to live with enhanced vision. Aside from the obvious (but dubious) activities such as looking at people naked and cheating a casino for a big payday, Xavier must don progressively heavier sunglasses to block out the light, and even complains of not being able to close his eyes to sleep, since he's able to see through his eyelids.

Corman includes some psychedelic, kaleidoscopic POV shots that anticipate his LSD films of the late 1960s, which the director famously dropped acid for in preparation. But despite Xavier's desire to keep taking the drops, the film resists obvious drug or addiction parables, he's only driven by a desire to understand the very fabric of being, which drives him toward madness.

"Only the Gods see everything," warns a fellow doctor near the beginning of the film, and Xavier quips that with his new vision he's quickly "closing in on the Gods." But the key to the film's metaphysical preoccupations lies in the final minutes, as he enters the ratty revival tent where a fire and brimstone preacher offers to save him. Xavier rejects the offer and says, "I've come to tell you what I see. There are great darknesses, farther than time itself. And beyond the darkness, a light that glows, changes. And in the centre of the universe... the eye that sees us all."

Appropriately, it's unclear what exactly Xavier sees – some kind of God figure (Stephen King once suggested it may be a Lovecraftian "Old God"), the Devil himself, as the preacher suggests, or perhaps even some spark of the universe, a glimpse of the blinding big bang explosion. But no matter how you see it, this glimpse into true reality is horrifying. It's also a reprisal for Xavier, who isn't just tampering in God's domain, he's storming the gates and demanding a seat at the table.

Other mad scientists may have tried to replicate Godly acts through scientific formulas and electronic devices, but only Xavier comes close to discerning what makes life possible, even if it's too much for humans to comprehend, or simply too terrible to accept. Either way, when it comes to the unknowable and impenetrable, Corman clearly believes it's probably best to stay in the dark.

IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT

DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

Hugh Detective

by John W. Bowen



Canadians know a thing or ten about horror – that's just a given. Just ask Dave Alexander, James Burrell or Paul Corupe. No, wait, tuck those guys. Ask ME. We're as ravenous for the stuff as any nation you can name, but we've also produced an impressive amount of it for a country with a population a fraction the size of the US.

We pioneered slasher films (*Black Christmas*) then turned around and churned out profitable retreads after the archetype became popular (*Prom Night, Terror Train, My Bloody Valentine*). Our homeboy David Cronenberg practically invented body horror – and endured his share of critical ass rape for it – years before becoming the arthouse darling our cineastes fawn over today. John Fawcett, Karen Walton and a mostly-Canadian cast turned teenage lycanthropy on its flea-bitten head with the now-classic *Ginger Snaps*. We've also done ourselves proud with lesser-known forays into survivalist horror (*Rituals*), rubber reality (*Hello Mary-Lou: Prom Night II*, *The Gate*) and nature-run-amok fare (*Of Unknown Origin*).

So how about a pitch-black ultra-disturbing TV miniseries that's equal parts psychological thriller, suburban Gothic and police procedural that will satisfy fans of both *Twin Peaks* and *True Detective* without really being too much like either of them? Yeah, we got that. It's called *Durham County* and it will tuck your shit up.



The series tagline – "Is suburbia safer, or does it just bury its secrets deeper?" – pretty much answers its own question within the first half of the premiere episode. Homicide detective Mike Sweeney (Hugh Dillon), emotionally battered from the murder of his partner and his wife's ongoing cancer treatments, leaves Toronto and moves his family to the bland suburb where he grew up. It's an ill-advised quest for normalcy: he arrives just in time to get saddled with a gruesome double murder/sexual assault case, and life only gets more complicated thereafter.

He learns the previous tenant of his new home committed suicide, his sketchy neighbour (Justin Louis) an embittered hockey has-been, a former friend turned bitter rival from his teen years, and when another murder occurs only days later, the victim turns out to be a woman he's been extramaritally bonking. And again, that's all in the first episode, though none of it seems rushed or arbitrary. In fact, the multiple twists, sudden impacts and air pockets in this show happen so organically, with such strong characterization from the cast and writers, that even the most outrageous moments feel organic. And from this point on, things only get crazier.

The violence is realistic and almost tangibly painful, and yet it's the fantastically strong writing and direction that makes *Durham County*'s numerous awkward situations – barbecues gone wrong, high school confrontations, tension-filled dinner parties, etc – prove almost as uncomfortable to witness as the murder and mayhem. Every character here has secrets, and the deeper we go, the more we become accustomed to expecting the worst, and yet there are moments of redemption that pop up in the oddest of places.

I could go on for many paragraphs about how good my Kingston homeboy Hugh Dillon is in the lead. He had already brought some terrific heel roles to life, from destructive punk rocker Joe Dick in *Hardcore Logo* (a part many joked was uncomfortably close to his real-life persona) to an abusive father on TV's *Degrassi: The Next Generation* to puritanical sadist Reverend Gilbert in *Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning*, before defecting to the good guys in the internationally acclaimed cop show *Flashpoint*. I'd also be remiss to exclude his years fronting Headstones, one of the most underrated rock bands this country has ever spawned, whose song "Cemetery" is hands down the best Canadian anthem to necrophilia ever. But *Durham County*'s Sweeney serves notice that Dillon is still full of surprises in his most impressive and heartfelt performance to date as a fundamentally decent, good-hearted family man with a lot of nasty baggage.

A shout-out to Louis for his portrayal of unsavoury neighbour Ray Prager, who just keeps getting nastier, is also due, and the rest of the cast (including Michelle Forbes and Michael Nardone in later seasons), which is similarly strong.

Durham County only ran for three seasons between 2007 and 2010, with only six episodes each time out, and all are widely available in various formats for home bingeing (which, let's face it, is always best). Now get the hell out of my basement, and stay the hell out of the 'burbs.

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BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

Waiting... Few things in life are so universally agonizing in horror, the most effective metaphor for unbearable delays has been the concept of Purgatory: the nether-region between life and the afterworld, populated by beings that are neither alive nor dead, eternally waiting to move on to a final, and hopefully pleasant, rest. It's a device at the heart of works as diverse as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *A Christmas Carol* and several *Hellraiser* films.

Purgatory is also the setting for *7 Days of Death*, a new miniseries by writer and artist Jordan Michael Johnson. In the book (now on sale from Devil's Due), tough guy Robert Boyd and his dog seek solace in a secluded cabin up in the snowy mountains. Robert is trying to escape the memories of his dead wife, who was murdered in front of him during a home invasion. But things are not what they appear, and soon Robert finds his quiet shattered by a giant monster tearing through the woods.

"My horror influences are things like *Evil Dead* and *The Exorcist*," says Johnson. "I enjoy the entertainment value of horror because of its ability to pull emotion from the viewer. Horror can be an awesome way to leave a viewer emotionally drained and thus invested in [your] story."



Expect a lot of emotion at the core of *7 Days of Death*. After the monster's attack, we learn that Robert is actually in Purgatory, having also died in the home invasion. Because he blames himself for the death of his wife, his guilt and shame prevent him from moving on, trapping his soul in limbo. But he soon finds out that the forces of evil – like the demon that ambushed him – are after his soul and that he has seven days of vicious attacks to survive in order to be reunited with his wife.

"I love pushing things as far as they can go," says Johnson, "then pushing them further. I had the idea of a man trapped in Purgatory as the base and I just went from there."

Being both artist and writer gives Johnson a unique advantage when it comes to fully realizing his vision. It also makes for a deliberate juxtaposition of the dark storyline and an art style that looks more like something you'd see in comics for kids.

"It's an interesting book to explain/pitch because my style is very light hearted and almost Disney-ish," he says, "yet the story is very serious and grim. If any other artist was working on this project and read the script, the outcome would be much different I'm sure. At face value, the book looks like it is just an off-the-wall cartoony, adventure book, then you read it and go, 'Holy shit, this just got real!'"

Despite the kid-friendly look, Johnson nevertheless manages to convey much of the story's dark tone visually (there's a very subtle visual clue involving Robert and his dog that immediately alerts sharp-eyed readers that all is not right). Helping matters is the story's bleak, winter setting.

While some may consider a snow-bound log cabin in the middle of nowhere to be paradise, for the purposes of this story, it's a stark and lonely representation of Robert's emptiness – though it has its practical purposes as well.

"The winter setting was initially put in place for emotional impact," explains Johnson. "That and the fact that the demons [drawn in shades of red] contrasted very well with the blues and whites of winter. However, there will be several different settings in the book as Robert's trials continue."



7 Days of Death: *Purgatory as a snowy wilderness.*

Johnson is vague when it comes to describing the remainder of Robert's journey, as he prefers that readers discover it along with his protagonist. He does, however, promise some surprises and many more horrors, especially of the monster kind, which he particularly enjoys creating. The demon seen in the first issue is a beautifully grotesque design in slimy pink, complete with buck teeth and a gaping hole in the middle of its chest.

"Inspiration is nothing in particular, honestly," he says of the method to his madness. "When I am designing them I let everything in my head go and I focus on creating something scary and awful. The process is very organic for me. Issue 1 is just the tip of the iceberg as far as what Robert will endure."

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO

QUICK CUTS

THIS MONTH: CLASSIC MONSTERS REMADE



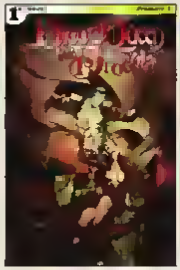
Horror comics continue to mine old literary works for inspiration, reinterpreting familiar characters and stories. *Frankenstein Underground* presents a relatively traditional version of the infamous creature, sharing the same origin as its literary counterpart and the same fate: to be hunted and tormented endlessly. However, this time the character inhabits the Hellboy universe (picking up in 1956, right after *House of the Living Dead*), and as such must also contend with its various supernatural horrors. The first issue sees the monster battling the Iblifika, a winged, demonic female spirit sent to seize the creature by the Marquis Aboet de Fabre. As a straight out monster test, the book works, and Shelley's creation fits nicely into his world. But Frankenstein stories are always at their most effective when they're able to use the creature as a doppelganger to a morally questionable human being – typically Dr. Frankenstein himself. In the doctor's absence, Fabre will hopefully fulfill this role and elevate the story from a mere slugfest.



For a different approach to the same source material there's *Joe Frankenstein #1*. This is the story of Joe Pratt, a pizza boy who makes a near-fatal delivery to a group of ravenous vampire women. Joe is rescued by our old friend the creature, sporting a fashionable turtleneck and windbreaker along with the requisite head scars. He has a couple of bombshells to drop on Joe, primarily the boy's true surname: Frankenstein.

And just to spice things up, there are more vampires lurking in the background. In the majority of Frankenstein tales, the creature is a helpless victim, trapped in a world he cannot and ultimately doesn't want to understand. *Joe Frankenstein* reverses the players' traditional roles and places the monster in the role of mentor for a change, with the human Frankenstein scrambling for answers. It's a simple reversal, but opens the door to new story possibilities.

Matching Frankenstein in popularity is Dracula, who finds himself playing second fiddle to Elizabeth Bathory in *Blood Queen vs. Dracula*. This is Dynamite's version of the notorious Countess, straight from the pages of her own *Blood Queen* series, which portrays her as a Machiavellian sorceress. Though Dracula is a vampire, he's more Vlad Tepes than Stoker's original, trying to rid 1582 Transylvania of the Ottomans. To that end, he seeks a union with Bathory, both politically and physically. This isn't the first time that Dracula and Bathory have appeared together in comics, and there's certainly an appeal to pairing up the world's most famous bloodsucker with one of history's most notorious blood bather. And yet it falls flat. The book gets bogged down in dull court intrigue and fails to build up suspense to what should be an exciting and climactic meeting between the two leads. And while getting rid of those oppressive Ottomans is a worthy ambition, I'm sure, it doesn't exactly resonate with modern readers, ultimately leaving us disinterested in what's sure to be a bloody union.

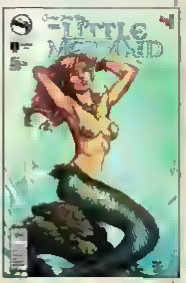




Monster Motors: *The Curse of Minivan Helsing* brings together Dracula and Frankenstein, and then throws in the Wolf Man and the Creature from the Black Lagoon for good measure. Except they've all been re-imagined as monster trucks. As a child I was always confused by those old monster dragster model kits, as I never saw the connection between Dracula and a hot rod. Brian Lynch must have shared that confusion and decided to finally meld creature and car in a suitable fashion. And so we end up with the Cadillacula, Frankenride, the Wheelwolf, Lagoon Buggy and the dreaded Zoombies.

Sure, there's an attempt to explain it all rationally and even tie in the original Dr. Van Helsing (who transferred his dying spirit into a minivan – hence, Minivan Helsing). But that's secondary to the ridiculous amount of fun to be had by watching the various cars go head to fender, while Victor Frankenstein and Van Helsing's daughter try to get out of the way. Just brilliant.

For this month's last review we turn to the world of fairy tales for inspiration with *The Little Mermaid*. There are plenty of children's tales used as the basis for modern horror stories, though *Mermaid* doesn't usually spring to mind. That won't stop Zenescope, however, which has built an entire company on spinning any and every fairy tale into a dark story. And so they've filled their tale with pretty mermaids that can turn into monsters at the drop of a fin, and an evil Sea Hag, who nevertheless manages to look sexy despite all those tentacles. There are also bad scientists who kidnap and conduct experiments on pretty mermaids, but I'm unsure if I'm supposed to be horrified by that or titillated. Come to think of it, that's my usual reaction when I read a *Grimm Fairy Tales* comic.



FRIGHT RAGS
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THE NINTH CIRCLE BOOKS

TOD BROWNING'S DRACULA

Gary D. Rhodes
Tomahawk Press

Why do we need another book about Universal's *Dracula*? According to Gary Rhodes, it's because "the others are wrong." It's difficult for horror fans to think of 1931's *Dracula* as anything but a highly respected classic. Widely considered the first horror "talkie" - directed by Tod Browning (*Freaks*) and starring the inimitable Bela Lugosi as the Count - it remains a blueprint by which other adaptations of Bram Stoker's vampire novel are judged.



And yet, film scholar and author Gary Rhodes (*No Traveler Returns: The Lost Years of Bela Lugosi*) sees Dracula as woefully underappreciated. He is particularly prickled that Browning has been increasingly maligned, cast as a poor, drunk or even absentee director, based mostly on a 1974 interview with cast member David Manners (Jonathan Harker), whose claim he was actually directed by cinematographer Karl Freund has become film lore. Rhodes has set out to restore Browning's reputation through his own original research, resulting in this comprehensive study of the film, from pre-production through to publicity stunts.

One can imagine Rhodes hunched over microfiche machines in library basements, examining even the smallest reference to the 1931 film. He has unearthed such gems as a 1939 *New York Post* article quoting Lugosi (in his native accent, apparently!) on his role as negotiator. "*Stoker heirs asked $200,000 for de film rights but Universal didn't like to pay dat much. Zo dey asked me would I correspond wid Mrs. Stoker, de widow, and get it maybe a liddle cheaper. I wrodt and wrodt until I get cramps, and after aboudt two months, Mrs. Stoker says O.K.*" (Universal eventually paid 40K for the rights to the book and stage plays.)

The book bursts with such article excerpts, as well as private Universal correspondence, that help Rhodes build his case that Browning was a successful, creative, dedicated director whose decisions on set and in the edit suite made the film a classic.

Perhaps Rhodes pats himself on the back a bit much for his passionate discoveries, and it's a shame there isn't more from Browning himself. But the book is a trove of info for Dracula lovers and students of early filmmaking, who will delight in the author's mythbusting (Lon Chaney Jr. was never supposed to play Dracula, e.g.), extensive bios of cast, writers and crew and dozens of film stills, publicity ads and other cool graphics from back in the day, all celebrating the "the strangest passion the world has ever known."

LISA LADDUCEUR

THE ACOLYTE

Nick Cutter
ChiZine Publications

There's real life horror aplenty in a time when media-savvy religious zealots commit atrocities with the aim of creating an iron-fisted theocracy. That makes Nick Cutter's *The Acolyte* both a timely and rather aggravating read for anyone feeling bombarded by hate-filled zealotry in the news. His dystopian future isn't borne out of the actions of an extreme Muslim group like ISIS, however, but takes place in an America ruled by evangelical Christians.

The book's protagonist, Jonah Murtag, is an Acolyte in New Bethlehem, a member of the police force tasked with stamping heretical activity, whether it's going into the Jewish ghetto to bust skulls and destroy rock albums or kidnapping and torturing a co-worker for suspected subversive activity. When a series of terrorist bombings threaten to destroy the city, Murtag is caught between his duties to enforce (corrupt) state control, his secret love for a co-worker, a conspiracy involving the city's leader and his own faltering faith in light of the terrible things done in God's name.



If it sounds more than a little didactic and over-the-top, it is, but Cutter (a pseudonym for Craig Davidson) is masterful at filling his story with the nasty detail, violent action and unexpected plotting that keep it moving and twisting like a faith healer's rattlesnake. And while *The Acolyte* is more dystopian sci-fi than horror, Cutter colours his world with vividly-described murder and mutilation, sideshow freaks and stomach-churning cruelty.

Bomb victims, beheadings and other bodily abominations aren't as tough to digest as the idea of Murtag's world, however. This is a place where science is outlawed, lobotomies are a common punishment, corner store animal sacrifices help atone for sin and hospitals "heal" with prayer. It's like the Jesus version of Mike Judge's movie *Idiocracy* (including the addiction to energy drinks) but without the humour.

Cutter, whose previous novels are *The Troop* and *The Deep* (see *RM#152*), gives us a hero who's just slightly less of an asshole in a kingdom of assholes, so it's tough to identify with him or care about his struggles. On the upside, the author's writing is notably smoother and free of the laboured similes and metaphors that plague *The Troop*, and he's better than ever at weaving his plotlines together towards a (quite literally) explosive climax. So, while *The Acolyte* may take you to a horrible place, credit to its author for finding such originality in the realm of the faithful and foolish.

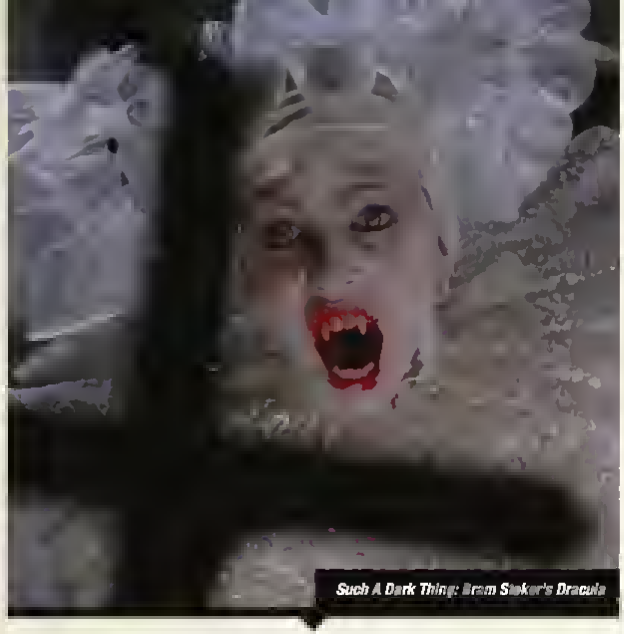
DAVE ALEXANDER

SUCH A DARK THING: THEOLOGY OF THE VAMPIRE NARRATIVE IN POPULAR CULTURE

M. Jess Peacock
Resource Publications

Vampires need to be taken seriously again. What was once a mystifying subgenre and is still deeply iconic is often met with a grimace due to an association with modern counterparts such as *The Vampire Diaries* or *Twilight*. Peacock, a life-long lover of the creatures of the night, attempts to not only remove any stigma in his heartfelt introduction to this book, but to also remove the embedded religious connotations that have become part and parcel of the mythos. He acknowledges that vampire hunters often use the Divine as a tool, but delves into the complexity of these issues rather than just combing the surface of the lore.

To wit, the majority of *Such a Dark Thing: Theology of the Vampire Narrative*



Such A Dark Thing: Bram Stoker's Dracula



in Popular Culture reads less like a straight piece of non-fiction and more like a university level thesis in Theology, despite its relatively short 66 pages. The essay doesn't shy away from technical jargon and will prove occasionally difficult for those not as versed in religious fundamentals. Nevertheless, the arguments are presented with great detail, diplomatically taking into account the sides of those who are averse to religion and those who are not. In everything, Peacock presents his theories in relation to vampire lore with confidence, not toxicity.

Among his more interesting explorations, we find the vampire as a feminist icon – when a woman is seduced by a vampire, there is an implication that her subsequent actions shatter the conventions placed on women in society. The latter half of the book and second essay, "The Undead in Popular Culture," is a charming and occasionally funny love letter to vampires in television, literature and film, and the author takes the opportunity here to list his tanged favourites. He effectively switches gears from formal essayist to casual commentator, a welcomed change.

RICHELLE CHARKOT

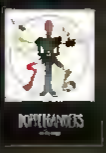
CAUCHEMAR

Alexandra Grigorescu
ECW Press

When we first meet Hannah, the main character in Alexandra Grigorescu's debut novel *Cauchemar*, she's mourning the loss of her adopted mother Mac, who raised her in an old house on the edge of a Louisiana swamp. We quickly learn that Hannah's not your typical twenty-year-old: townspeople shudder as she approaches, she has virtually no life skills to speak of and her birth mother is the town pariah and leader of a church that allegedly communes with the spirit world.

Hannah's life is further disrupted when she crosses paths with Callum, a sexy blues guitarist and boat captain with more than a few skeletons in his own closet, while the reappearance of an old childhood friend named Sarah Anne brings up memories soured by tragedy. Then there's those pesky visions that only Hannah can see, including a skeletal albino alligator

THE GRIM READER



DOPPELGÄNGERS

Alex Pardee
Ginko Press

From *The Thing* to *The Ring*, Chop Top to RoboCop, *Evil Dead* to *Eraserhead* and *Ghoulies* to Voorhees, Alex Pardee's *Doppelgängers* is a rogues' gallery of movie monsters throughout history. Stretching back to classic Universal creatures and including new beasts such as the human walrus from *Tusk*, his 150 cartoon-y watercolours are chock full of personality and sly humour. Snag this beautiful hardcover and revisit some old f(r)iends.

DAVE ALEXANDER

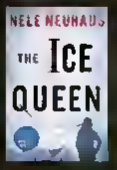


DR. CAGLIOSTRO'S CABINET OF CURIOSITIES: INVESTIGATIONS OF THE UNKNOWN VOL. IX

Oskar H. Hejll
ChamoCopia Publishing

Showcasing various oddities – whether they be a mummified creature that resembles a mermaid, or a telephone that Edison created to communicate with the dead – this book is a treat for those with a taste for the unexplained. It's easy-to-read and easy-to-flip with a very diverse set of peculiar subjects. That said, we don't recommend it for anyone remotely skeptical of its extravagant claims.

ALEX CUNIO



THE ICE QUEEN

Nele Neuhaus
St Martin's Press

When Holocaust survivor Josef Goldberg is executed in his home, a suspicious tattoo and a five-digit number scrawled in blood at the crime scene set the stage for a murder mystery. In spite of the sinister setup and some admittedly grisly killings, the story centers on a wealthy lady's dirty laundry and long-standing grudges, making it an engaging but altogether tame thriller. Recommended for fans of whodunits along the lines of Agatha Christie rather than Stephen King.

ANDREA SUDISSATI



IT WAITS BELOW

Eric Red
Samhain Publishing

What promises to be page-turning sci-fi with a horror edge ends up being an amateur novel with little payoff. The syntax is more suited to young adult fiction due to the various gratuitous sex scenes and rampant expletives, even though we would not recommend this for teens. Yes, Eric Red has the screenplay to *The Hitcher* on his resume, but *It Waits Below* reads more like it was written by a seventeen year-old boy who has just discovered the delights of overusing the word "boob."

RICHELLE CHARKOT

MONSTER HUNTERS: ON THE TRAIL WITH GHOST HUNTERS, BIGFOOTERS, UFOLOGISTS, AND OTHER PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS INVITES US TO EXPLORE THE EXPLORERS OF THE STRANGE

MEN AND WOMEN OF MYSTERY

by LYLE BLACKBURN

IT'S HARD TO TURN ON A TELEVISION THESE DAYS WITHOUT RUNNING ACROSS A SHOW THAT INVOLVES PARANORMAL INVESTIGATION. There are ghost hunts, monster quests, UFO chases and even scientific studies out to prove that unknown boogeymen truly do exist in our world. It's a popular premise for pseudo-reality programs that feature everything from cryptozoologists tromping through the woods to ghost busters using high-tech gadgets to facilitate communication with the dead. An increasing number of them have taken up the mantle of Paranormal Investigator. The monsters they hunt are familiar – Bigfoot, Chupacabra, ghosts, extra-terrestrials, demons included – but who are these individuals dedicating their lives to the pursuit?

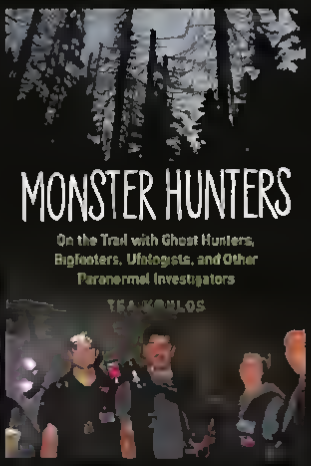
That's exactly what journalist Tea Krulos reveals in his new book, *Monster Hunters: On the Trail with Ghost Hunters, Bigfooters, Ufologists, and Other Paranormal Investigators* (out in June from Chicago Review Press). Within its pages, Krulos turns the spotlight on the hunters instead of the hunted, offering a new perspective on the paranormal phenomenon.

"I've always been interested in people [who are] considered unusual by mainstream standards," he explains. "I've also been a fan of the paranormal since I was a kid, so it was a natural fit for me to explore the personalities involved."

Taking him to nine different states over the course of a year, *Monster Hunters* has Krulos recounting his participation in investigations in the deep woods of Michigan to search for Sasquatch, trekking into the Florida Everglades to learn about the Skunk Ape, visiting the Virginia home of the Mothman and enduring long nights in a reputed haunted house. But these adventures were not his biggest challenge. Convincing investigators to allow him into their fold was the first, most difficult step.

"Some [researchers] were reluctant," he recalls. "I was an outsider and I know some people have been burned by the media before. I tried to explain that I wasn't looking to bash or make fun of anyone; I was genuinely interested in the subject. Fortunately, I found people who wanted to give me a chance and share what they were doing."

Krulos also delved into the realms of fake monsters, conducted UFO research, took a trip to the International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, Maine (see *RM#107*) to view historical items and supporting evidence for cryptids, and even dabbled in demon hunting while attending a "curse-breaking seminar" hosted by Reverend Bob Larson, a man known as the "Real Exorcist." And while the author notes that he encountered some terrifying noises in the woods while looking for Bigfoot, it was a bar that scared him more than anything else.



"I joined a ghost hunting team as they investigated Bobby Mackey's Music World in Kentucky [the self-proclaimed 'most haunted nightclub in the USA']," Krulos recalls. "One of the team members – and I share this in my book – had a weird possession or something happen to her. It was frightening to witness."

At the end of the journey Krulos found himself pondering many of the same questions as the researchers he writes about.

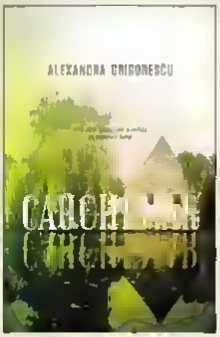
"There is a lot more Bigfoot evidence than I expected," he says. "I found a lot of compelling ghost and UFO stories and evidence, too."

He stresses that the mysterious things he discovered at some of the places he visited was matched by the unexpected things he discovered about the people he met along the way.

"I think there's a stereotype of paranormal researchers as being kind of kooky, tinfoil hat wearing weirdoes," says Krulos. "But what surprised me is the amount of down-to-earth people with good, normal careers who have this as a passion."

One has to wonder, after all of this, what mystery does he now find to be most compelling?

"I have to say my heart goes with cryptozoology," states Krulos. "I love those stories and had such a great time camping out in the field pondering whether these mysteries actually exist."



that slithers through the reeds and scrapes through the house with hooked claws

It's safe to say that there's a lot going on in *Cauchemar*, a novel as lovely and enticing as a gentle bayou breeze – and occasionally slow as molasses. That's not to say this book doesn't have a lot going for it. Grigorescu is a gifted writer, and her prose is sumptuous, particularly when it parallels delicious Southern cooking with the sensuality of Callum and Hannah's romance. "Persillade, a mixture of parsley, garlic and olive oil, scented his breath as he sang to her on the small balcony," reads one encounter.

Grigorescu's evocative descriptions extend to the story's supernatural elements, too, particularly in reference to Christobelle, Hannah's birth mother. "She seemed to track the fog with her eyes as it crept over the bayou, alighting on the tips of ferns. It moved like a spirit, sly and slow…" In order to commit to a story so delicately balanced between the mystical and the matter-of-fact realities of Southern life, the narrative must consume the reader, and for the most part Grigorescu effectively creates an absorbing, hypnotic world. I do wish, however, that the story had been better paced. The atmosphere surrounding Callum and Hannah builds in layers until it becomes overwhelmingly dense with nuance and foreshadowing, only to reach a staccato burst of small climaxes at the book's completion. Readers versed in Southern gothic – particularly fans of Joe R. Lansdale – will see these twists a mile away, and Grigorescu does us a disservice by forcing us to tiptoe towards the revelations.

As a debut novel, perhaps *Cauchemar* is meant to be more about the journey than the destination. If that's the intention, it's a delectable, if ultimately unsatisfying ride.

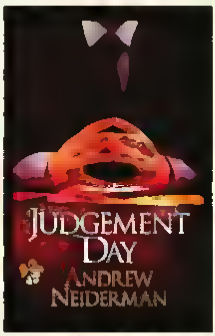
ALISON LANG

JUDGMENT DAY

Andrew Neiderman

Pocket Star

If vanity is your favorite sin, author Andrew Neiderman, ghostwriter of the famed V.C. Andrews franchise, has a surprise for you. *Judgment Day*, the prequel to the 1990 novel *The Devil's Advocate* – which went on to inspire a major motion film adaptation starring Al Pacino – will hit digital bookshelves this June. For those of you unfamiliar with *The Devil's Advocate* (spoiler alert) John Milton esquire, the story's antagonist, is actually the fallen angel Lucifer, secretly doubling as the head of a major law firm in New York City. In an effort to keep in mode with the war on God, Milton has traded his legionnaire armor for an Armani suit, using his power to twist and bend the spirit of the law to get criminals back out onto the streets so they can harm or corrupt as many innocent people as possible.



In *Judgment Day*, we're taken back to the beginning of the wily Devil's legal escapades, to where Milton, not yet in power, comes to New York and single-handedly steals his own law firm by exploiting the fears and fantasies of co-workers and superiors as he slithers to the partner's table. The book's protagonists include Lieutenant Matthew Blake, who is blessed with several gifts to sniff out the supernatural, and lawyer Michele Armstrong, a budding assistant district attorney determined to prove her worth to her superiors at any cost.

Twenty-five years since the first novel's publication, Neiderman is still taking us to school on Faustian bargains and the dangers of temptation. There are times when the storyline feels more like an occult mystery, and less like the demonic John Grisham-esque atmosphere that originally captivated audiences, but that's really the only caveat I can give. This time around, fans of the original novel will be pleased to know that there's much more John Milton, as well as the introduction of demons, connections to characters from the original novel, and, for better or worse, lots of Al Pacino film references peppered throughout the pages… It's yours to lose.

MOANER T. LAWRENCE

LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

Awards season: that time of year where you get to see if your critical darlings match those of the hive mind – complaining when they don't and rejoicing when they do. For instance, while my favourite book of last year didn't make it onto the Bram Stoker Awards ballot, some other amazing reads (which were solid runners-up on my list, including Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, see *RM#146*) are duking it out in the First Novel category. But, this year, there's one Stoker I'm truly thrilled about: ChiZine Publications snaring the Specialty Press Award.

If you're a regular reader of the column, you'll know how I feel about the myriad problems plaguing horror publishing, from poor editing to low-quality covers (big houses and boutique presses alike). The folks doing it wrong are legion, but Toronto-based ChiZine is that rare example of a company whose releases are the complete package – and it's also, quite frankly, the most exciting press to come out of Canada in years. Since branching out into physical books in 2008 (with just two releases, compared to the twenty-plus they have scheduled for 2015), the company has proven that a small press can not only produce high quality genre fiction, but present it in such a fashion that almost every one of the book covers is a work of art. Occasionally spot varnished or embossed, they are always intriguing and inviting – the type of books that you *have* to flip over to read the teaser on the back.



Narratively, they take chances too. As evidenced by Gemma Files' magical dark western *Hexslinger* trilogy (and its gay gunslingers), a significant portion of ChiZine's catalogue moves beyond horror's most common archetypes and tropes (vampires, zombies, slasher killers, etc.) to explore less trodden but no less fertile pastures (David Nickle's *Eutopia*, for instance, sows its seeds of terror in the eugenics movement). Not surprisingly, the press has become home to some of our country's most celebrated literary weirdos, including Tony Burgess (*Pontypool Changes Everything*). That's impressive, even before you consider that ChiZine accomplished all this during one of the most turbulent times in publishing in recent history.

In its company philosophy, ChiZine writes: "We want stories using speculative elements – magic, technology, insanity, gods or insane-magic-technology-gods all in one – to show the dark side of human nature. The good guy can feel – and act on – anger, hatred, vengeance just like the villain. Heroes don't always win, conclusions don't always wrap things up nicely, and sometimes things can take a turn that's just plain weird."

It's a mandate they've stuck with and excelled at, even as they've launched a YA line and now a graphic novel imprint – and one that leaves readers in very capable hands. Congrats, ChiZine, on an award well deserved.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: JONATHAN PAYNE'S FLESHLETTES



If body horror is your cup of gruel, you'll want to feast your eyes on Jonathan Payne's, hyper-realistic abominations, which are unlike anything you have ever seen. Called Fleshlettes, they're seemingly from another dimension, but the bizarre creations were actually inspired by stories from a Payne family member who had a teratoma tumor removed. (Cystic teratoma are germ cell tumours commonly composed of multiple cell types and are known to contain hair, bone, teeth and, in rare cases, eyeballs!) They're also meant to celebrate the ugly or strange parts of our bodies.

I was immediately impressed with how realistic and alive they look, so I had to pick Payne's brain about his process.

What are your Fleshlettes made of?

All of my flesh sculptures – up to this point – have been made out of polymer clay. It allows me to mix the skin colours like paint as I sculpt, and it allows me to avoid having to make a mould or castings.

I'm reminded of the body horrors of Cronenberg and the cult film *Society* [see p.30] by Brian Yuzna.

This is the first time I've heard of *Society* but I'm curious to find out more. There is definitely an unintentional creature DNA shared with Cronenberg.

Were you inspired by any special effects artists or fine-artists while you were designing and creating the Fleshlettes?

The two strongest artistic influences while creating the Fleshlettes came from Chris Cunningham's Rubber Johnny and the sculptures of Ron Mueck.

What kind of responses do you get to the work?

They always seem to elicit an uncomfortable laugh in a person. I'm happy that people find them approachable but strange and unsettling. I think that's perfect!

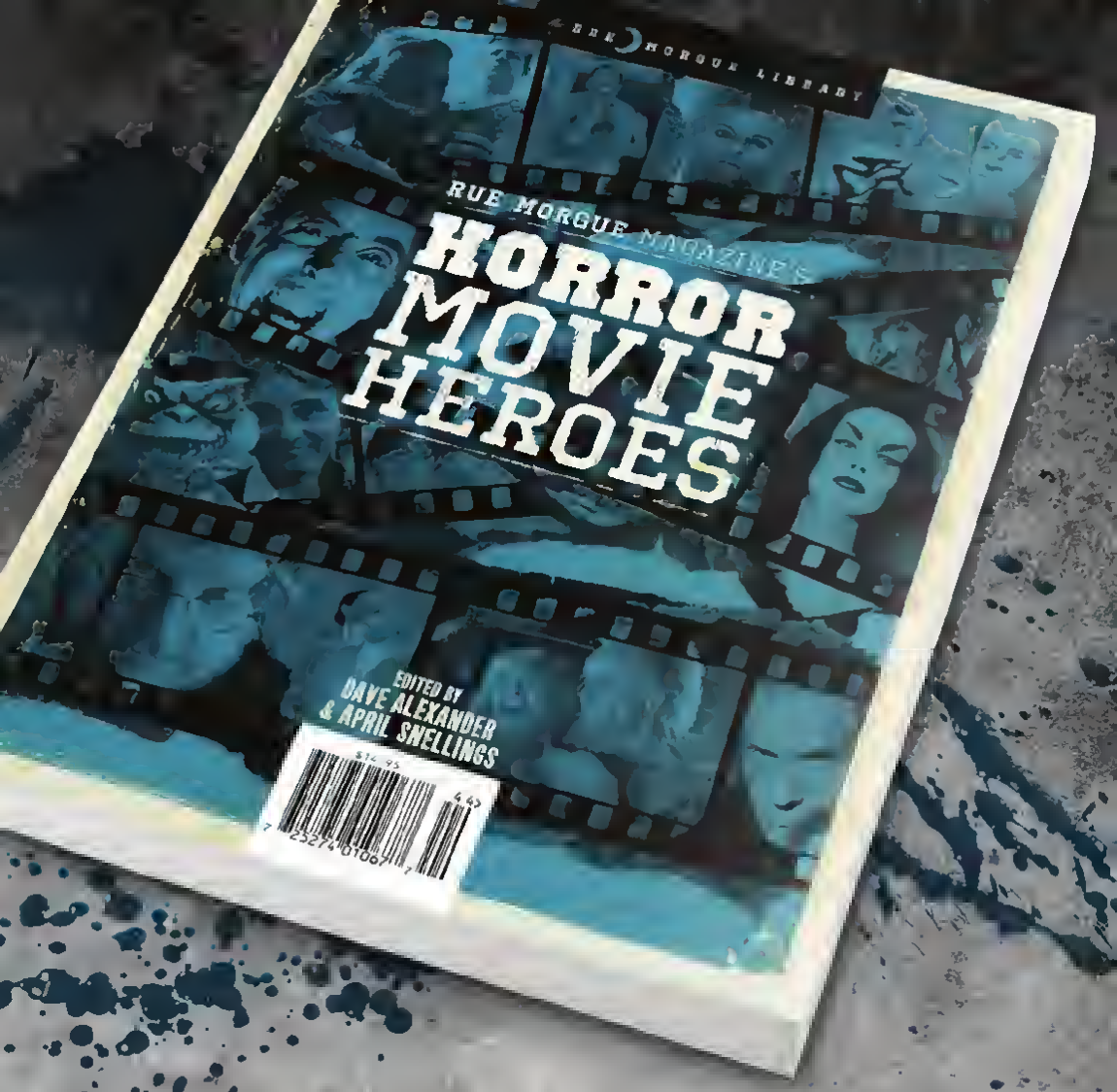
What does one of your pieces sell for?

They all vary greatly depending on size and complexity and they are all original sculptures. They range from $70 for the smallest Fleshlettes all the way up to $2500 for the largest pieces.

Why do you think people are so transfixed by the grotesque?

I think we find grotesque objects so interesting because they mirror feelings we have about our own bodies. Everybody has something about their physical self they find repulsive.

For more on Jonathan Payne's incredible Fleshlettes, check out paynesculptures.com



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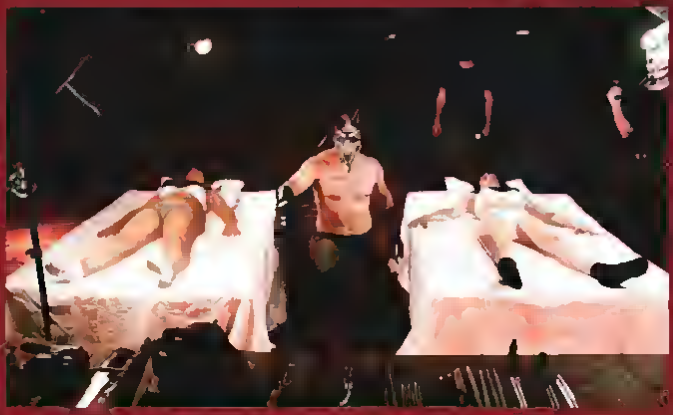
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THE GORE-MET

MENU: AMERICAN GUINEA PIG



The Holy Grail of video tape trading back in the late '80s and '90s the Japanese *Guinea Pig* films. Sourcing copies that weren't a half dozen generations away from the original JHV tapes was next to impossible. Needless to say, it was a red letter day when I was handed a first-generation copy of the ultimate film in the series, *Guinea Pig 2: Flower of Flesh and Blood* (1985), by my partner in piracy whose identity I cannot disclose.

The hunt for quality copies ended in 2005 when Stephen Biro, a video store owner in Miami, acquired the North American rights to the films and launched Unearthed Films to release them officially.

"My partner actually worked with the company over in Japan so the rights weren't hard to get," reveals Biro. "Unfortunately, if you didn't grab copies of that release, you're forever doomed to eBay. Trying to re-release them will never happen. The actors are actually famous now and it brings them great shame due to the child murders that happened during [that time]."

Biro is referring to the discovery of a copy of one of the *Guinea Pig* films in the massive VHS collection of notorious Japanese serial killer Tsutomu Miyazaki, known as the "Little Girl Murderer" for killing, cannibalizing and molesting the corpses of four girls between the ages of four and seven in 1988 and 1989. Unable to secure the necessary rights for a re-release, Biro decided to go ahead with his own series, *American Guinea Pig*.



"I've been trying to work with the company JHV in Japan to make a new series ever since we picked up the rights back in 2002," Biro relates. "The main guy actually retired and said 'Fuck it' and gave us the rights. We are working with them, but they want no part of it. Several of the producers don't want credit or anything since they knew where I am going to take the series."

American Guinea Pig: Bouquet of Guts and Gore is the first entry, which Biro wrote and directed. Take it from me: it is without a doubt the most brutal gore film ever made.

In the opening sequence, a man in a gas mask abducts two women after setting off a gas bomb in the back of their car. The film then cuts to three men who don creepy papier-mâché masks and descend into a stark basement where the women are chained to beds placed before a table piled with tools and surgical implement. The victims are then injected with a paralyzing drug and dosed with LSD before being told by their principal tormentor (YouTube star Eight The Chosen One, a.k.a. Eight The Chosen One) that they can expect nothing less than to be "systematically tortured to death while being filmed for our benefactors."

What ensues is a raw cavalcade of carnage shot by underground legend Jim Van Bebber (*The Manson Family*, *Deadbeat at Dawn*) in a style ripped straight out of the '70s.

"I see many new films since I run Unearthed," says Biro, "and, to be honest, so many people are trying to go overboard and show pee, poo, cum, cutting, vomit and such, just to get a rise. *American Guinea Pig* is all about the gore. It might get twisted and be too much for a lot of people to handle."

That is an understatement courtesy of the extreme gore effects from *100 Tears* director Marcus Koch, who is signed to direct *Bloodshock*, the second film in the series, which will also be written by Biro.

"He can direct actual emotional scenes and story lines," he says about Koch, "so it makes sense to have our FX wizard direct the next installment. You can even say it's the *American Guinea Pig* love story!"

Bouquet of Guts and Gore will be released by Unearthed Films on July 23rd in two DVD versions. The single disc will feature "drunken commentary" by Biro and Marcus, and a second track with Biro and Van Bebber. Other features include a music video from metal band Perdition Temple, a stills gallery and behind-the-scenes material. The three-disc limited edition will contain a soundtrack CD, a 105 minute-long making-of with a ton of extra gore effects and behind the scenes shenanigans, cut scenes from the movie, unused scenes, a 25-minute-long FX preproduction video, more uncut scenes and a massive stills gallery. You get all this, plus a twelve-page booklet written by Scott Gabbey of *Ultra Violent*. Brace yourselves!



SALES *from the* CRYPT













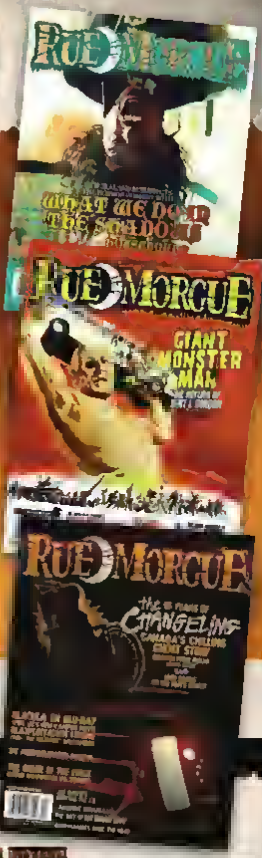






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AUDIO DROME

PACHECO SEAN PLUMMER JON E STEFFENS JEFF SZPIRGLAS AND GLENN TILSON



TURKEY SHOOT

SOUNDTRACK

Brian May

DUAL PLANET

Alternately known as *Escape 2000* and *Blood Camp Thatcher*, *Turkey Shoot*'s grimy bottom-of-the-Ozploitation-barrel appeal can be found in the score by the late Brian May (not to be confused with the guitarist from Queen). A product of its time, May's work relies heavily on fierce percussion and the kind of 1980s synthesizer strains that recall the work of John Carpenter or other low-budget horror scores of the era. There are moments when the sparse orchestral palette opens up and we're treated to something larger scale (and budget) – the aggressive brass stabs and strident chords of "Radio Freedom" and "Open Season" sounding very much like May's *Mad Max 2* score. *Turkey Shoot* is a fun auditory time capsule, peppered with dialogue excerpts and sound effects from the film. However, while the music fits well with the dystopian imagery, it strains to make the same impression as the film. Its schlocky appeal is piecemeal and repetitive. Die-hards will want it; otherwise you're best to stick to your *Mad Max* scores for the best of May. ★★½ JS



THE BOOGEY MAN

SOUNDTRACK

Tim Krog

MOTIONSOUND

Like a lot of low budget '80s slashers, Ulli Lommel's *The Boogey Man* (1980) made use of a creepy synth score to build up appropriate levels of dark ambience. An original group composition lead by Tim Krog (whose only other soundtrack credit is *The Boogey Man*'s 1983 sequel) *The Boogey Man* soundtrack contains three variations of its main theme, with parts two and three functioning as effective, memorable melodies that exist somewhere in the same spooky realm as *Phantasm*. The rest of the album is really a collection of individual sound effects and soundscapes that combine to create a supernatural spectral feel. The original *Boogey Man* LP now sells for hundreds online, so it's fortunate that Motionsound Records has reanimated this underrated score in a limited run of 500 pressed on 180g clear vinyl. Like the movie itself, there is an undeniable lowbrow quality to this music, but taken apart from a mostly forgettable entry in '80s horror, *The Boogey Man* soundtrack exists as a chilling little record in its own right. ★★★½ AVL



THE NIGHT TERRORS

INSTRUMENTAL

Pavor Nocturnus

TWISTED NERVE AUSTRALIA

What if Bernard Herrmann was still alive and playing with the prog-rock band Muse? That's kind of the vibe of The Night Terrors' latest album, subtitled *A Composition for Grand Organ, Theremin, Analogue Electronics and Percussion*. It sounds like someone dug up the massive organ from Herrmann's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, plucked out the eerie Theremin from *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and tossed in a few Goblin albums for funsies. The experiment holds up well, and there's a nice range of tonalities between the rumbling organ and strains of high-pitched Theremin. At around 40 minutes, *Pavor Nocturnus* explores the mashup of these instruments to their full potential and certainly rocks the Theremin better than anyone since the Beach Boys on *Good Vibrations* – though its overuse is an acquired taste. Also worth checking out is The Night Terrors' YouTube site for a behind-the-scenes of the album being recorded live at Melbourne Town Hall. ★★★ JS



CANCERSLUG

PUNK

Rootwork

SLUGCULT RECORDS

Sounding like *Unholy Passion* era Samhain coated in the bleak, self-loathing grime of Eyehategod, Cancerslug's latest is the kind of record you'd put on if you were partying with Bret Easton Ellis, Glenn Danzig and GG Allin on Halloween night. While sticking to familiar themes of hatred ("Leviathan"), lycanthropy ("Wolfcraft," "She Wolves") and nihilism ("Junkie"), *Rootwork* is the most sonically abrasive offering from the Alabama deathcult yet. From "How to Die Inside" to "Rape Train," this album is horror punk elevated to transgressive art. Giving this a spin should evoke several emotions, none of them warm and comfortable. Wade into its darkness and let it swallow you; by the end of it you'll need a shower. ★★★½ JES



GRAVEOALE HIGH

PUNK

Aux Mort

AAAHH!!! REAL RECORDS

Sharing a name with Hanna-Barbera's short-lived 1990 cartoon starring Rick Moranis as the only human teacher at an all monster school, Gravedale High embodies that youthful exuberance as the band plays at break-neck speed, isn't shy with the "whoaaa!" and tosses in the odd metal guitar solo. *Aux Mort* (a short EP clocking just over ten minutes) contains energetic, if unmemorable, odes to digging graves and eating brains. "Exhumed" is the high point, a catchy drinking ditty that will stick with you like a bad

HANDS OF ORLAC

METAL

Figli Del Crepuscolo

HORROR RECORDS



Italian horror fans take note: the sophomore effort from Hands of Orlac, *Figli Del Crepuscolo* ("Children of the Nightfall"), is drenched in the sort of musty, gothic atmosphere that permeated the country's early classics from directors Mario Bava and Antonio Margheriti, as well as the sort of mystical doom metal that Italy produced in the late '70s/early '80s with artists such as Paul Chain and Death SS. The album brings these influences together with mid-paced riffing and dark, minor key melodies and the ghostly howl and ethereal chanson of vocalist/flautist The Sorceress. It also helps that the band rips its lyrical inspiration straight from the vaults of cult 1970s horror ("Mill of the Stone Women") and saturates its music with evocative sampling and creepy keyboard lines that sound like a Lucio Fulci zombie opus. *Figli Del Crepuscolo* is one hell of a doom metal record, and a reminder of why the spirit of Italian horror will never truly die. ★★★½ GP

LISTEN to MY NIGHTMARE

Metalsploitation films discussed in this month's music feature make for fun retro viewing but, like all lowbrow exploitation films, they don't exactly treat their subject matter seriously. Movies such as *Trick or Treat* deal with heavy metal in the simplest way possible, playing up to the stereotype of dumb headbangers. A couple of recent literary horror anthologies might be changing that, however, by aiming to deliver something more sophisticated.



Swords of Steel out now from DMR Books, is a collection of fantasy/horror stories penned exclusively by members of metal bands, including Manilla Road and Bal-Sagoth. In its introduction, David C. Smith (author of the *Red Sonja* novels) describes the book's content as a kind of "weird adventure" that differs from traditional high fantasy by focusing on darker themes, brutal reality and more morally complex characters than the heroes of typical sword and sorcery epics.

"The stories in *Swords of Steel* are darker and more serious than a lot of the Tolkien-derived sword and sorcery stuff that's been popular for so long," says anthology editor Dave Ritzlin. "The characters' lives – and sometimes souls – are at great risk, and you don't know whether or not they'll survive."

In "The Riddle Master" by E.C. Hellwell (from Manilla Road), a man makes a wager with the devil with his soul on the line. "Into The Dawn of Storms" by Byron A. Roberts (Bal-Sagoth), introduces Caleb Blackthorne, an English buccaneer on a quest to save himself from the dark forces haunting him.

"Some of the stories are in the style of H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe," explains Ritzlin. "The rest of the stories are more along the lines of sword and sorcery fantasy, filled with strange magic, inhuman gods and monsters, horrible curses...and more fun stuff."

Meanwhile, Despumation Press recently released *The Healing Monsters*, an anthology of dark fiction featuring stories by both horror authors and members of extreme metal outfits such as Broken Hope and Pig Destroyer. A benefit project with proceeds split between the trust of late *Metal Maniacs* editor Katherine Ludwig and ailing horror author Dustin LaValley, the book strives to add a sense of optimism to its tales of monsters and madness.



"The only real guideline I gave potential contributors was to tap into the triumphant, defiant side of horror and metal rather than rote, played out nihilism," says co-editor (and Rue morgue Writer) Shawn Macomber. "We're dealing with deadly serious matters here, and I wanted *The Healing Monsters* to inspire people in tough situations to persevere and overcome, not lay down before fate and give up."

Clocking in at 400 pages and containing 28 stories, *The Healing Monsters* covers a lot between its dark covers.

"Several contributors did something explicitly metal-based and others spun off into completely bizarro territory, merely adopting the snarl and velocity of metal," says Macomber.

If anything, both *Swords of Steel* and *Healing Monsters* prove that when it comes to horror, metal is capable of favouring the profound over the profane.

AARON VON LUPTON

hangover, but the overall impact is washed out by a sea of similar sounding groups in an increasingly overcrowded genre. That said, fans of rough-around-the-edges bands like American Werewolves or Devils Whorehouse may still want to skip school to see these Norwich UK ghouls. ★★★ TD



VINCE RIPPER & THE RODENT SHOW

[PSYCHOBILLY]

It's Fun to Be a Monster

ECLECTIC

The corpses of classic deathrock and psychobilly get dug up on *It's Fun to Be a Monster*, but is it a worthwhile resurrection? Ex-Alien Sex Fiend drummer Andrew "Ratfink" Wilson lends his gravelly pipes to this collection of covers, and while he obviously has the greatest respect for The Cramps' Lux Interior, his takes on "New Kind of Kick," "Zombie Dance" and "Sunglasses After Dark" (among others) will leave listeners longing for the licentiousness of that lean, lewd and late singer. Ripper and Ratfink also scrape the sonic gunk off several Fiend tracks including "Attack!!!," "New Christian Music" and "Smells Like...," but we prefer the lo-fi viciousness of Nik Fiend's originals. The band's ooky-spooky approach, which includes cheesy horror movie dialogue and Ratfink's demented laugh, works best on its version of the *Spider Baby* theme. Indeed, it is fun to be a monster and it is almost as fun listening to this record. ★★★ SP



INDESTRUCTIBLE NOISE COMMANDO

[METAL]

Black Hearse Serenade

FEROCIOUS RECORDS

Remember when Zakk Wylde and Lamb of God recorded an album together? Okay, that never happened, but INC do a pretty good job of convincing you that it did. Speaking of fictional stories, this tale of a broken child grown up to head a murderous Jonestown-ish congregation could be clearer, yet from *Night of the Hunter* to *Hellbenders*, morally compromised preachers are a genre staple, and lyrics such as "The congregation swarms like rabid flies/For them to love...they must despise/Heads down...you'll get what you pray for," delivered in Dennis Gergely's dusty croon and hoarse roar keep one engaged along the occasionally bewildering journey. Some sparse piano ("Lucky #7") and lovely acoustic guitar ("Love Like Napalm") along with solos like flames licking a funeral pyre, add nuance and texture, but mostly it's pure blunt-force trauma, all pummelling riffs and crushing drums sure to appeal to fans of Machine Head, Pantera, et al. ★★★ GT



CARCASS

[METAL]

Surgical Remission/Surplus Steel

NUCLEAR BLAST RECORDS

Riding the crest of a wave built on massive critical and fan acclaim following 2013's *Surgical Steel*, Carcass returns with an EP of unreleased tracks and B-sides. Fans of the melodies, harmonies and tasteful guitar leads of *Surgical Remission*'s predecessor and the legendary *Heartwork* album – along with Jeff Walker's trademark snarl – will find more than enough here to satisfy. That said, those missing the brutality of Carcass' early material (or the instant catchiness of the criminally underrated *Swan Song*) are sure to be disappointed. However, both parties should be satisfied with the closing duo of catchy, mid-paced "Livestock Marketplace" and the heart(string)work of "1985 (Repnse)." Stiff, for the old-school die hards, this is only a remission of recent symptoms. ★★★ GT

ACID WITCH PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE LOST ART OF METALSPLOITATION WITH *MIDNIGHT MOVIES*

ROCK 'N' SHOCK

BY AARON VON LUPTON

THE '80S ARE CELEBRATED FOR A VARIETY OF HORROR SUBGENRES: SLASHERS, BODY HORROR, SPLATTER COMEDIES, ETC. BUT ARGUABLY NONE WAS MORE SPECIFIC TO THAT DECADE THAN METALSPLOITATION FILMS. Not only did this subgenre put horror movies and heavy metal together – effectively doubling the ire it raised from parents – it was also a natural move for studios looking for a wider audience. Put together, these two socially caustic ingredients resulted in some truly special films, such *Rocktober Blood* (1984), *Trick or Treat* (1986) and *Black Roses* (1988).

Given the current fascination with '80s culture, it's no surprise that a metal band would pay tribute to those black leather and hairspray horror flicks. And that band is Acid Witch, known for its overtly heavy stoner metal dedicated to witchcraft, Satan and Halloween. Case in point: its new 12-inch EP *Midnight Movies* (out now on Hells Headbangers) which showcases cover songs from the aforementioned films.



"I have always been a massive fan of '80s heavy metal," says Acid Witch front man Slasher Dave (pictured above, second from left). "When I first noticed the merging of these two genres – horror and heavy metal – I feverishly sought out more movies of this nature. I also recall the first time I watched *Return of the Living Dead*; the punk soundtrack blew my brains out of my skull, as it featured all of my favourite bands at the time, and still to this day."

It was that punk horror classic that gave the band the idea to record other songs associated with '80s horror movies. If you've seen the Detroit group play recently, you'll know it ends its gigs with the legendary "Partytime" by 45 Grave, the most anthemic track on the *RotLD* soundtrack.

"I think that song, particularly, is what pushed us to record this EP," says Dave, "though it was always a thought lingering in our minds since our conception as a band. I reckon we will begin playing 'I'm Back' [by the LA band Sorcery, appearing on *Rocktober Blood*] as well, once we return from our 2015 European Tour."

Rounding out the 12-inch is "After Midnight" by British metal band Fastway (from *Trick or Treat*) and "Soldiers Of The Night" from *Black Roses* by the band of the same name.

Fans of Acid Witch and Slasher Dave's faux-soundtrack albums (he won 2013 *Rue Morgue* Album of the Year for his *Spookhouse* album) have come to expect colourful packaging and artwork from their releases, and *Midnight Movies* is no exception, it features original art by bassist Shagrat, for each of the films covered.

Dave's metalsploitation obsession has also found another artistic outlet recently: his new movie T-shirt company Trashforce.

"Trashforce creates retro movie themed T-shirts, crafted specifically for cult film enthusiasts and alternative cinema diehards," he explains. "You will not see Trashforce releasing mash-up shirts for fourteen-year-old girls to purchase exclusively with the intent of posting on Instagram with a horror nerd hashtag."

He points out the company's design for *Trick or Treat*, which showcases Sammi Curr, the film's devil-worshiping rock star, oozing up from the remnants of a vinyl record.

"This is a metaphor of sorts," elaborates Dave. "While this aforementioned scene does not actually happen in the movie, he is reincarnated from the record."

And if Acid Witch fans find the inherent silliness of metalsploitation at odds with the band's usual weed-fuelled occult dirges, Dave isn't concerned. As he explains, there's a connecting thread that runs through all of it.

"Of course it works with the overall image of Acid Witch. If you dig deeply enough into our subject matter, we do explore very dark themes – the very things that plague humanity. I think I can explain it best through our cover art: there is a dual-dynamic constructed here. While at first glance the art fashions together a colourful, sleazy world akin to '80s cinema, it actually speaks to the truly malevolent facets of human nature and the beyond. Our image and music is wrapped in this esoteric, occult imagery."

PLAY DEAD



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SUNLESS SEA

PC

Failbetter Games



When compared to other horror games, *Sunless Sea* is positively sedate – there are no frenetic, gruesome monster battles, no traditional boss fights. It's just you and the gloomy, incredibly dangerous open seas.

The game begins with a quote from author Joseph Conrad (*Heart of Darkness*) – the first indicator of *Sunless Sea*'s deep investment in mythic storytelling. Set in a London that has mostly sunken into the water, you choose your character background and goal (fulfillment, wealth or familial obligation), and set sail. Exploration and gathering crew are key; as players discover new ports, new quests become available and, with them, new opportunities to gain supplies and fuel (which are in perpetually short supply) and lower your "terror level."

There are many ways to die in *Sunless Sea* – starvation (after cannibalizing your crew), decimation by enemy ship or creature, complete descent into insanity – and you will die, probably often. This is particularly cruel since the game is meant to be played without saves and do-overs (though this feature can be turned off). One small solace: you do carry some legacy perks to your next captain after death.

Quests and port exploration are done via text-based decision-making and RPG-style stats. The writing is rich and descriptive – at times quite Lovecraftian and reminiscent of the weird tales movement, replete with unusual monsters (from talking vermin to creepy tomb-colorists) and unsettling, fantastical settings. Ship navigation is controlled by the W, A, S and D keys, and your boat comes equipped with a zee-bat that can alert you to nearby land masses. *Sunless Sea*'s only real shortcoming is its clunky naval battle system, which has a habit of turning hostile encounters into suicide missions, making it wiser to flee than engage, when possible.

Coloured in murky greens and flavoured with eerie music, the dour, threatening mood is palpable and sustained. *Sunless Sea* is gloriously dark and weird and – with Failbetter Games regularly adding new stories – constantly expanding. These are all great reasons to climb aboard this ship, though you may develop an unexpected phobia of open water as a result.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

HEADSHOTS VAST SEA TO EXPLORE, WELL-DEVELOPED WORLD AND NARRATIVE
MISFIRES TOO MUCH REPETITION OF QUEST TEXT, UNWIELDY SHIP BATTLES



THE ORDER: 1886

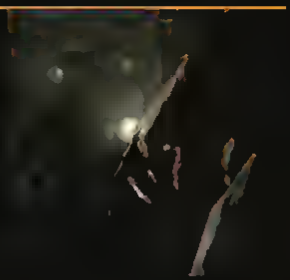
PS4

Ready At Dawn

The Order 1886 recreates Victorian-era London, where a group of elite knights fight a centuries-old war against sinister threats to the Empire, ranging from insurgent rebels to supernatural half-breed Lycans. As Sir Galahad, players must either take lead or supporting roles in missions against this ominous threat while using anachronistic steampunk technology and gadgets to dispose of enemies and save the day. You'd be forgiven for thinking this sounds more than a little like the setup of *Van Helsing*.

The re-imagined world of late 1800s London is dreary yet beautifully designed and begs to be explored. The detailed environment is further complemented by a non-intrusive interface, where button prompts appear at a minimum. Players are equipped with the weapons they'll need going into any encounter (the C-81 Maschinepistole, in particular, packs a helluva steam-punch) but the game takes these weapons away as readily as it gives them – it's a trope that is often used in gaming as an excuse for exploration and backtracking, but here it feels like a lazy excuse to have the knights enter their next mission with less effective weapons. In addition, getting knocked down in combat requires imbibing a resuscitation potion to recover, followed by mindlessly mashing the X button, which quickly becomes annoying.

The game's stealth moments are among its most enjoyable, as combat encounters tend to devolve into rapid button-mashery. Galahad moves slowly for the most part, playing into the game's deliberate, measured pacing. Quickly tapping the left stick sends him into a brisk jaunt, which allows for cool, parkour-style movements up walls, across ledges and over crevices. While the player takes up much of the screen during control movements, careful consideration has been paid to camera placement, and the overall the look of the game is excellent.



Ready At Dawn poured painstaking detail into creating realistic, believable environments for players to explore and battle. That said, at times *The Order* feels like it rests a little too comfortably on the cinematic side of the storytelling with interactive game play taking a back seat. Still, it remains a worthy first attempt at a PS4 title.

SHAUN NATTON

HEADSHOTS EXCELLENT VISUAL DESIGN CREATES A WORLD WORTH EXPLORING
MISFIRES EXPLORATION IS LINEAR, FIREFIGHTS FEEL CLUNKY

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CLASSIC CUT

MANHUNTER

MICHAEL MANN ☠ USA – 1986

It's widely accepted that *Manhunter* is one of the best police procedural thrillers ever made, and yet few movies occupy such an odd place in cinema history as Hannibal Lecter's big-screen debut. The first of two adaptations of the 1981 novel *Red Dragon* by Thomas Harris, it was directed by Michael Mann (*Thief, The Keep, Miami Vice*), released with a pedestrian title and years later remade under its original title with Anthony Hopkins reprising his most famous role as everyone's favourite iconic (and laconic) cannibal. The novel sold well but never scaled the monster bestseller heights of its sequel, *The Silence of the Lambs*; similarly, Mann's film garnered some critical and financial success but was barely a blip on the pop culture radar compared to the multiple-Oscar-winning blockbuster and instant classic that Jonathan Demme's *Silence* would become a few years later.



What's beyond dispute is the influence *Manhunter* had – and continues to exert today – on both horror and crime drama on screens big and small. We tend to think of *Silence* as the film that brought criminal profiling and behavioural science to prominence in popular culture, but it was *Manhunter*'s moderate early success and subsequent burgeoning cult status that helped spawn the likes of *Se7en, Nattevagten, Law & Order, The X Files* and *CSI*.



Future *CSI* star William Petersen plays *Manhunter*'s protagonist Will Graham, a criminal profiler whose empathic talents border on the psychic, a most reluctant hero whose uncanny ability to crawl inside the psyche of the killers he tracks has driven him to the brink of madness. Similarly, it's easy to see how *Manhunter* planted the forensics seed currently sprouting in TV's *Hannibal*, a large portion of which is focused on the investigation of horrific serial killer crime scenes and the toll they take on Graham.

Ultimately, the most common debate over *Manhunter* isn't about whether or not it's a good film, but rather *why*. Mann's director/producer trademarks are unmistakeable here, and yet the tacky aesthetic of *Miami Vice* only sporadically rears its mullet head (a suit without socks here, a calculated five-o'clock shadow there). Overall, the filmmaker took what could've been a considerably pulpier tale and elevated into an operatic game of cat-and-mouse that relies on some unforgettable performances.

Granted, *Manhunter*'s main villain may be less complex than *Silence*'s Buffalo Bill, but he's every bit as savage and compelling. Tom Noonan (*The Monster Squad*) plays Francis Dolarhyde (dubbed "the Tooth Fairy" by the media), a lumbering film lab employee who murders entire families and is targeting a third as the FBI races against time to identify and stop him. Outwardly, he's a painfully shy and socially awkward gentle giant who would easily elicit our sympathy had we no idea of his crimes; Noonan's performance is rightfully regarded as superior to Ralph Fiennes' turn in *Red Dragon*.

Furthermore, as *Hannibal* would be a much tamer beast without Brian Reitzell's much lauded score driving the action, for *Manhunter* Mann used his soundtrack to set his protagonist and antagonist on harrowing collision course. *Manhunter*'s score is a child of its time, featuring inspired choices from Shriekback and Kitaro, with the bulk of the background score provided by the Reds. The sequence widely considered the film's cornerstone is the climactic showdown between killer and cops, presented in what was then cutting-edge music video style with Iron Butterfly's psychedelic classic "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida." The similarities between this sequence and *Hannibal*'s Season Two finale – both featuring an agonizing ramp-up toward an explosion of violence in a kitchen – are striking.

But what of Lecter? In *Manhunter*, Hannibal (inexplicably rechristened "Lecktor") was a more-or-less blank slate for actor Brian Cox. To say Hopkins made the role his own is a colossal understatement, but the germ of Cox's performance is very present. In *Manhunter* we know Lecter as a charming, cultured and brilliant – and now incarcerated – psychotic but we are told nothing of his penchant for cannibalism. Cox, already an award-winning television actor and respected Shakespearean stage performer at the time, based his performance on real-life Scottish serial killer Peter Manuel, and presented Hannibal as the tightly-coiled predator we can easily recognize.

His incarceration, secure as it may be, only drives home the idea that he can be contained but never controlled, the slicked-back hair, impeccably neat appearance and general economy of movement give him a reptilian aspect that is now familiar to us in its similarity to Hopkins' Lecter. Mads Mikkelsen's performance in the television series amplifies and intensifies these qualities. But Mikkelsen is just the latest part of a serial killer mythology that got its pop-culture sea-legs in the defining cinema of Michael Mann.

JOHN W. BOWEN

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